

CA 19-9



Does this test have other names?

Cancer antigen 19-9, CA 19-9 radioimmunoassay (RIA) test

What is this test?

This test looks for the antigen called cancer antigen 19-9 (CA 19-9) in your blood.

Antigens are substances that stimulate your body's immune system. Some types of cancer cells send CA 19-9 into the blood, where it can be measured with this test.

A high amount of CA 19-9 is most often caused by pancreatic cancer. But it can also be caused by other types of cancer. And it can be caused by infections in your liver, gallbladder, and pancreas.

Antigens like CA 19-9 that give information about cancer are called tumor markers. This test is not used as a screening test for cancer.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your healthcare provider thinks you might be at risk for cancer. This may be because of your symptoms or because you have a family history of cancer. You may need this test as part of your diagnosis along with other tests.

You may also need this test if you are having cancer treatment. It may be done every week or so to see how well treatment is working.

You may also need this test if you have already been treated for cancer and your healthcare provider wants to see if your cancer has come back.

This test works best to help diagnose or make decisions about treatment for pancreatic cancer. But it may also be used for other cancers.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider may also order tests to check for other tumor markers. You may have imaging scans or other blood tests to learn about your cancer. These other tests can tell if you may have a condition other than cancer that causes a positive CA 19-9 blood test.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Results are given in units per milliliter (U/mL). Normal results are less than 37 U/mL.

It's important to know that higher levels of CA 19-9 may not mean you have cancer. Conditions other than cancer can cause higher levels. These conditions include an infection of your pancreas, liver disease, gallstones, and cystic fibrosis.

Here is what your results may mean:

- If your CA 19-9 is less than 37 U/mL, you may not have cancer.
- If your CA 19-9 is above 37 U/mL, you may have cancer of the pancreas, gallbladder, lung, or colon.

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If you have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and your healthcare provider is using this test as part of your treatment, here is what your results may mean:

- If your CA 19-9 is going up during treatment, it may mean that the treatment is not working yet.
- If your CA 19-9 is going down during treatment, it may mean that the treatment is helping you.
- If your CA 19-9 went down after treatment but later goes back up, it may mean that your cancer has come back.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle has some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Having radiation therapy for cancer when you have this test may give a false-positive result even if your treatment is working.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to prepare for this test. Be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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