

Hepatitis C Antibody



Does this test have other names?

Antibody to HCV, anti-HCV

What is this test?

A hepatitis C antibody test is used to find out if you are infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). When your body is infected with a virus, it makes antibodies to fight the virus. The hepatitis C antibody test looks for antibodies that the body makes in response to the presence of HCV.

HCV infects the liver, often causing inflammation and damage. It can lead to cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer. It's more common in developing nations.

Why do I need this test?

Every adult who is 18 years of age or older should have this test at least once to screen for HCV. You may also need this test if your healthcare provider suspects that you have HCV. If you are infected with HCV, you probably won't have any symptoms at first. As a result, the CDC recommends having the test if you:

- Ever injected illegal drugs
- Had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- Received clotting factor concentrates for hemophilia before 1987
- Are the child of a mother with HCV
- Have been a sexual partner of someone with HCV
- Have HIV
- Are a healthcare worker who may have been exposed to HCV

HCV can lead to liver disease, which has these symptoms:

- Nausea
- Dark urine
- Gray- or clay-colored stool
- Fever
- Yellow skin (jaundice)
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Decreased appetite
- Frequent bruising
- Belly pain

Symptoms of severe liver disease include mental confusion and swelling of your feet, ankles, and belly.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

If your results on the hepatitis C antibody test are positive or you have symptoms that suggest HCV, your healthcare provider may order a hepatitis C RNA test. This is a blood test that looks for genetic evidence of the virus itself. Another test, called viral genotyping, helps find out what kind of HCV infection you have and what type of treatment may be needed. In some cases, you may need a liver biopsy to look for liver damage related to HCV.

Other tests may be done to look for ballooning of the blood vessels in the esophagus (varices) or cancer in the liver (hepatocellular carcinoma). Chronic infection with HCV can cause inflammation and destruction to blood cells, blood vessels, and other tissues in the body. Your healthcare provider may test for these conditions as well.

You may be tested for other types of hepatitis viruses such as hepatitis A or hepatitis B).

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.

A test for hepatitis C antibodies is either positive or negative. If you test positive, you may have an HCV infection. But it could also mean that you had the infection in the past and are not currently infected. If you test negative, it is likely that you don't have the infection.

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 carries 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?

Hepatitis C antibody is just 1 of many tests that healthcare professionals use to diagnose a HCV infection. It simply notes that you have been exposed to the virus. It can't tell a current infection from a past infection. A weak positive test result could be a false-positive.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't have 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.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.