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## Bile culture

Bile culture is a laboratory test to detect disease-causing germs (bacteria, viruses, or fungi) in the biliary system.

### How the Test is Performed

A sample of bile is needed. This can be done using different methods, including gallbladder surgery or a procedure called endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP).

The bile sample is sent to a lab. There, it is placed in a special dish called a culture medium to see if bacteria, viruses, or fungi grow on the sample.

### How to Prepare for the Test

Preparation depends on the specific method used to obtain the bile sample. Follow your health care provider's instructions exactly.

### How the Test will Feel

If bile is taken during gallbladder surgery, you will feel no pain because you are asleep.

If bile is taken during ERCP, you will receive medicine to relax you. You may have some discomfort as the endoscope passes through your mouth, throat, and down the esophagus. This feeling will go away shortly. You may also be given medicine (anesthesia) so that you will sleep lightly for this test. If you are asleep, you will not feel any discomfort.

### Why the Test is Performed

This test is done to detect infection within the biliary system. The biliary system creates, moves, stores, and releases bile to help in digestion.

### Normal Results

The test result is normal if no bacteria, virus, or fungus grew in the laboratory dish.

Normal value ranges may vary slightly among different laboratories. Some labs use different measurements or may test different specimens. Talk to your provider about the meaning of your specific test results.

# What Abnormal Results Mean

An abnormal result means bacteria, fungus, or a virus grew in the laboratory dish. This may be a sign of infection.

## Risks

Risks depend on the method used to take a sample of the bile. Your provider can explain these risks.

## Alternative Names

Culture - bile

## References

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