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ELISA blood test

ELISA stands for enzyme-linked immunoassay. It is a commonly used laboratory test to detect antibodies in the blood. An antibody is a protein produced by the body's immune system when it detects foreign or potentially harmful substances, called antigens.

How the Test is Performed

A blood sample is needed. Most of the time, blood is drawn from a vein located on the inside of the elbow or the back of the hand.

The sample is sent to a laboratory where the targeted antibody or antigen is linked to a specific enzyme. If the target substance is in the sample, the test solution turns a different color.

How to Prepare for the Test

No special preparation is needed.

How the Test will Feel

When the needle is inserted to draw blood, some people feel moderate pain. Others feel only a prick or stinging. Afterward, there may be some throbbing or a slight bruise. This soon goes away.

Why the Test is Performed

This test is often used to see if you have been exposed to bacteria, viruses or other agents that cause infection. It is also used to screen for current or past infections. It is also used to test for some disorders of the immune system.

Normal Results

Normal values depend on the type of substance being identified. Some laboratories use different measurements or test different samples. Normal value ranges may vary slightly among different laboratories. Talk to your health care provider about the meaning of your specific test results.

What Abnormal Results Mean

Abnormal values depend on the type of substance being identified. In some people, a positive result may be normal.

Risks

There is little risk involved with having your blood taken. Veins and arteries vary in size from one person to another, and from one side of the body to the other. Taking blood from some people may be more difficult than from others.

Other risks associated with having blood drawn are slight, but may include:

- Excessive bleeding
- Fainting or feeling lightheaded
- Multiple punctures to locate veins
- Hematoma (blood accumulating under the skin)
- Infection (a slight risk any time the skin is broken)

Alternative Names

Enzyme-linked immunoassay; EIA

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