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Epstein-Barr virus antibody test

Epstein-Barr virus antibody test is a blood test to detect antibodies to the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which is a cause of the infection mononucleosis.

How the Test is Performed

A blood sample is needed.

The sample is sent to a lab, where a lab specialist looks for antibodies to the EBV. In the first stages of an illness, little or no antibody may be detected. For this reason, the test is often repeated in 10 days to 2 or more weeks.

How to Prepare for the Test

There is no special preparation for the test.

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 slight bruising. This soon goes away.

Why the Test is Performed

The test is done to detect an infection with the EBV. EBV causes mononucleosis or mono. The EBV antibody test detects not only a recent infection, but also one that occurred in the past. It can be used to tell the difference between a recent or previous infection.

Another test for mononucleosis is called the Monospot test. It is often done when a person has current symptoms of mononucleosis.

Normal Results

A normal result means no antibodies to EBV were seen in your blood sample. This result means you have never been infected with EBV.

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

What Abnormal Results Mean

A positive result means there are antibodies to EBV in your blood. This indicates a current or prior infection with EBV.

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

EBV antibody test; EBV serology; Mono test

References

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Updated by: Jatin M. Vyas, MD, PhD, Associate Professor in Medicine, Harvard Medical School; Associate in Medicine, Division of Infectious Disease, Department of Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

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