



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Epstein-Barr virus antibody test

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003513.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003513.htm)

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

Johannsen EC, Kaye KM. Epstein-Barr virus (infectious mononucleosis, Epstein-Barr virus-associated malignant diseases, and other diseases). In: Bennett JE, Dolin R, Blaser MJ, eds. *Mandell, Douglas, and Bennett's Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases*. 9th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2020:chap 138.

Plourde AR, Beavis KG. Specimen collection and handling for diagnosis of infectious diseases. In: McPherson RA, Pincus MR, eds. *Henry's Clinical Diagnosis and Management by Laboratory Methods*. 24th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2022: chap 66.

Review Date 8/26/2023

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.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)



Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health