

HEPATITIS C

What to Expect When Getting Tested

Getting tested for Hepatitis C

- A blood test, called a Hepatitis C Antibody Test, is used to find out if someone has ever been infected with Hepatitis C.
- The Hepatitis C Antibody Test, sometimes called the Anti-HCV Test, looks for antibodies to the Hepatitis C virus. Antibodies are chemicals released into the bloodstream when someone gets infected.
- Test results can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to come back. New rapid tests are now available in some health clinics and the results of these tests are available in 20 to 30 minutes.
- Most people who get infected with the Hepatitis C virus develop a chronic, or lifelong, infection. This is known as chronic Hepatitis C.
- However, some people are able to get rid of, or “clear,” the virus.

What does a non-reactive Hepatitis C Antibody Test result mean?

- A **non-reactive** or negative antibody test means that you are not currently infected with the Hepatitis C virus.
- However, if you think you might have been exposed to Hepatitis C in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.

What does a reactive Hepatitis C Antibody Test result mean?

- A **reactive** or positive antibody test means you have been infected with the Hepatitis C virus at some point in time.
- Once people have been infected, they will always have antibodies in their blood. This is true if they have cleared the virus or still have the virus in their blood.
- A reactive antibody test **does not** necessarily mean that you currently have Hepatitis C and a follow-up test is needed.

What to do if the Hepatitis C Antibody Test is reactive

- If the antibody test is reactive, you need an additional test to see if you currently have Hepatitis C. This test is called a RNA test. Another name used for this test is a PCR test.
- If the RNA or follow-up test is:
 - **Negative** - this means you were infected with Hepatitis C, but the virus has now been cleared from your body.
 - **Positive** - this means you currently have the virus in your blood.
- If you have a **reactive** antibody test and a **positive** follow-up test, you will need to talk to a doctor experienced in diagnosing and treating Hepatitis C.

For more information

Talk to your doctor, call your health department, or visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis.

