

HEPATITIS C TEST



Hepatitis C is a serious infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is transmitted through blood contact when the blood of a person with hepatitis C comes into contact with the bloodstream of another person. The HCV test is the only reliable method of knowing whether a person has hepatitis C.

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You can have an HCV test for free at a primary healthcare centre, at a sexual health clinic or at a community organisation (NGO). Your doctor may recommend that you have a HCV test when you visit the surgery or the hospital for another reason.

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The test is confidential. If you do a HCV test at a community organisation, you are not required to give your name.

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Before being tested, a member of staff should inform you of what taking the test means and answer your enquiries.

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The HCV test is a voluntary act and the decision to take it is yours. It is recommendable if you think that you have been exposed to the virus at any time or if you have engaged in risk practices.

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THE TEST CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS:

a. A test to detect the presence of HCV antibodies

Antibodies are substances generated by the immune system in response to viruses, bacteria and other pathogens that enter the body.

- In most HCV tests, a blood sample is taken from the arm. The results may be ready in a few days or take up to two weeks.
- Some health centres or community services use another type of test in which a small amount of blood is taken from a finger or oral fluid is taken from the gums. The results are ready in just a few minutes.

A positive result to the HCV antibody test means that you have been in contact with the virus at some time, but does not necessarily mean that you currently have hepatitis C. To find out whether HCV is still in your body, another more specific test needs to be done.

If you have recently engaged in a risk practice, the test may not detect the presence of antibodies accurately. Your doctor may therefore suggest that you directly take another more specific test.

Anti-HCV antibodies do not provide protection against reinfection by the same virus.

GTT-VIH
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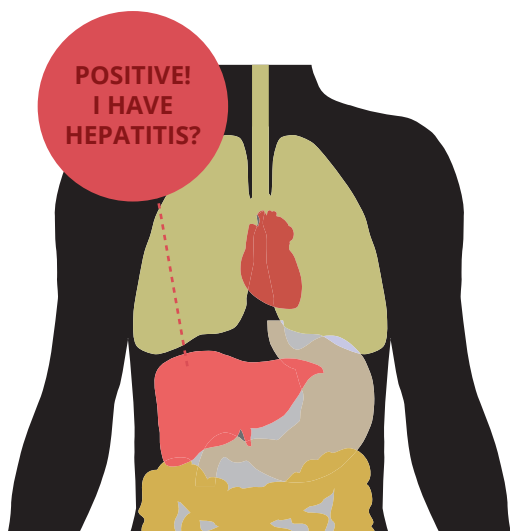
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b. A test to detect the presence of HCV RNA

RNA is the genetic material of some viruses. A blood sample is taken from the arm to detect the presence of HCV RNA. This will confirm or rule out whether a person has hepatitis C. The results may be ready in just a few days or take up to two weeks.

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INTERPRETING THE RESULTS:

Antibody test	RNA test	Interpretation
Negative	Negative	No HCV infection
Positive	Negative	No HCV infection (spontaneous resolution)
Negative	Positive	Recent HCV infection False positive. The test must be repeated
Positive	Positive	HCV infection

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If the final result is positive, you will be referred for specialised medical care.

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The result is confidential. It will not be communicated to your family, your place of work, or the immigration authorities without your permission.



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