

INTERPRETATION OF SCREENING TESTS FOR HEPATITIS B & C, AND HIV

HEPATITIS B

	Hepatitis B surface		Hepatitis B core		Hepatitis B 'e'	
	Ag	Ab	Ab (IgG)	Ab (IgM)	Ag	Ab
Never infected	Neg	Neg	Neg			
Vaccinated	Neg	Pos	Neg			
Immune by natural infection	Neg	Pos*	Pos			
Acute infection:						
Early	Pos	Neg	Neg	Neg	Pos/neg	
Late	Pos	Neg	Pos	+++	Pos	
Carrier:						
High infectivity	Pos	Neg	Pos	Pos/neg	Pos	Neg
Low infectivity	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Neg	Pos

*not detectable in 10-15% of cases of past infection.

HEPATITIS C

The presence of hepatitis C antibody indicates the occurrence of infection at some time in the past. On-going infection is only confirmed by the presence of hepatitis C antigen as detected by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), as up to 20% of acute infections resolve spontaneously.

The absence of hepatitis C antibody does not exclude infection if any risk behaviour has occurred within the last 3 months. Tests for the antibody may be repeated at a maximum frequency of 3 monthly intervals in the case of on-going risk behaviour.

HIV

The absence of HIV antibody does not exclude infection if any risk behaviour has occurred within the last 3 months. Tests for the antibody may be repeated at a maximum frequency of 3 monthly intervals in the case of on-going risk behaviour.