

# Chickenpox (Varicella Zoster)

Chickenpox and shingles are caused by an infection with the varicella zoster virus (VZV), a member of the herpes virus family. This blood test will detect antibodies produced by the immune system in response to either a VZV infection or vaccine.

## Why do I need to be tested?

Testing for VZV may be used to:

- Determine immune status of individuals to VZV
- Documentation of a previous infection with VZV in an individual without a previous record of immunization

## How is the test performed?

When someone is exposed to VZV, their immune system responds by producing antibodies to the virus. Two classes of VZV antibodies may be found in the blood: IgM and IgG.

IgM antibodies are the first to be produced by the body in response to a VZV infection. IgM antibodies are only present during the infection period and eventually fall below detectable levels after the symptoms have passed. IgG antibodies are produced by the body several weeks after the initial VZV infection and provide long-term protection. Levels of IgG rise during the active infection, then stabilize as the VZV infection resolves and the virus becomes inactive. This test looks for the presence of IgG antibodies to determine if you have been previously infected or have been immunized; it does not detect the presence of IgM antibodies that appear in an active infection.

## What should I do if my results are positive or negative?

It is always recommended you meet with a healthcare provider to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your healthcare provider will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, will be able to provide an accurate picture of your health status.

**If your results were positive:** If VZV IgG antibodies are present, then it is likely that you have been exposed to VZV either through infection or immunization. You should share your results with your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options and/or further testing.

**If your results were negative:** If the antibodies for VZV are not found, you have not been exposed to the virus or received a vaccination. You should talk to your healthcare provider to let him know you have not been vaccinated and discuss your options.

## What other resources are available to learn more about my health and laboratory tests?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- Lab Tests Online: [labtestsonline.org](http://labtestsonline.org)
- WebMD: [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

*DLO Direct offers direct access to laboratory testing for informational purposes. A DLO Direct lab test result is not a medical diagnosis and is not intended as medical advice. Only a healthcare provider can interpret lab results and diagnose a medical condition or disease.*

*Because tests have not been ordered by a healthcare provider, third party entities, including Medicare and Medicaid, will not reimburse for these tests.*



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