

Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV-1 and HSV-2) Screen

Herpes simplex virus testing is performed to detect herpes antibodies, an indication of a current or previous exposure to herpes. Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted disease caused by two types of viruses. The viruses are called herpes simplex type 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex type 2 (HSV-2).

What is the difference between herpes simplex type 1 and herpes simplex type 2?

Both types are contagious and periodically cause small fever blisters (vesicles) that break to form open lesions. HSV-1 primarily causes blisters or “cold sores” around the mouth, while HSV-2 usually causes lesions around the genital area; however, either one can affect the oral or genital area.

What are symptoms of genital herpes?

Genital herpes sores usually appear as one or more blisters on or around the genitals, rectum or mouth. The blisters break and leave painful sores that may take weeks to heal. The first time someone has an outbreak of sores, they may also have flu-like symptoms such as fever, body aches or swollen glands.

Repeat outbreaks of genital herpes are common, especially during the first year after infection. Repeat outbreaks are usually shorter and less severe than the first outbreak. Although the infection can stay in the body for the rest of your life, the number of outbreaks tends to decrease over a period of years.

Is herpes curable?

There is no cure for herpes, but antiviral medications can prevent or shorten outbreaks.

How does the test work?

The blood test looks for appearance of antibodies to HSV, which are specific proteins that the body creates and releases into the bloodstream in response to the infection. HSV IgM antibody production begins several days after a primary (initial) HSV infection and may be detectable in the blood for several weeks. HSV IgG antibody production begins after HSV IgM production. Once someone has been infected with HSV, they will continue to produce small quantities of HSV IgG. HSV antibody testing can detect both HSV-1 and HSV-2 viral types.

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: You should share your results with your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options and/or further testing. The presence of HSV-1 or HSV-2 IgM antibodies indicates an active or recent infection, while HSV-1 or HSV-2 IgG antibodies indicate a previous infection.

If your results were negative: A negative test result simply means the test did not detect the organism and doesn't necessarily indicate a clean bill of health. If you have symptoms or concerns over potential exposure, you should speak with your healthcare provider.

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

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov
- Lab Tests Online: labtestsonline.org
- WebMD: 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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