

# HIV ANTIBODY TEST - INDETERMINATE RESULT

## WHAT IS HIV?

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus)  
HIV is the virus, which causes AIDS. Over time it may reduce the body's ability to fight infection. By attacking key cells (known as CD4 cells) in your immune system. CD4 cells trigger your immune system to create antibodies in order to fight off infection.

## WHAT IS AIDS?

(Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)  
A person with HIV may, at some point, develop AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS usually indicates that an individual has had HIV for a number of years. There are specific illnesses or infections may indicate that someone has AIDS.

## WHAT IS THE HIV ANTIBODY TEST?

It is a blood test, which looks for HIV antibodies. Antibodies are produced by the body in response to an infection. If you are infected with HIV, then HIV antibodies will be present in the blood.

It can take up to 6 weeks for HIV antibodies to develop after a person has been infected (known as the 'Window Period')

When someone undergoes an HIV test, the initial testing performed is a blood sample, called the ELISA test. The ELISA is a highly specific test which determines if any antibodies associated with HIV are present in your body.

If this is negative and more than 6 weeks has passed since the last risk, no further testing is required and the person receives a negative HIV result.

If the ELISA tests positive, it is suggesting the possibility of a HIV infection. The sample is then tested in duplicate to avoid laboratory error and goes on to further, more specific testing.

The next test is called the Western Blot. The western blot detects antibodies that react specifically to a number of different HIV proteins.

For an HIV test to be positive, this test needs to show reactivity to all the main groups of HIV antibodies.

## WHAT IS AN INDETERMINATE HIV RESULT?

Occasionally, a result is neither positive nor negative. This is what we call an indeterminate HIV result. This can occur when the ELISA test returns positive and either the western blot is negative or only reactive to a couple of the HIV antibodies.

As well as HIV antibodies, the ELISA can be triggered by a number of naturally occurring antibodies that you may have in your blood. Other triggers can include recent influenza vaccination and other viral infections. So this reaction has nothing to do with HIV.

An indeterminate result can also occur due to insufficient time for the body to produce the complete response following a HIV infection, that is, the blood sample was taken during the window period following a risk.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE AN INDETERMINATE HIV RESULT?

If your result comes back as indeterminate, you will need to return for follow up testing. This involves giving additional blood samples, over a period of time, which may be up to three months. The laboratory determines the length of time between testing.

You will have the opportunity to speak to a health professional about the result and they will provide assistance and information when you need it. We also have two counsellors available who can support you through this stressful period. Your practitioner will tell you when you need to return to the clinic to give further blood samples.

During your time waiting, if you have further questions, please call the numbers below....

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre  
Information and Results Line  
Ph: 93470244 or Free Call: 1800 032 017

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on HIV Antibody Test - indeterminate result. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.