NHS
Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Blood tests in the Respiratory Medicine Department (Chest Clinic)

Information for patients

If you are over the age of 16, you may have been offered tests for three blood-borne viruses. These tests are free and the results are only shared with you and other health care professionals. You will get the results in a letter if negative or be contacted by telephone if further tests are needed.

1. Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B – Hep B – is a virus that affects the liver. It is common in the general population in South East Asia, Middle and Far East, Southern Europe and Africa. It is passed on in body fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluids and saliva) and is very infectious.

It can be passed on:

- To a baby during birth from an infected mother.
- By having unprotected sexual contact with someone who is carrying the virus.
- By injury from infected sharp object e.g. needle, razor.
- By using un-sterilised equipment for tattooing and body piercing.

What are the symptoms?

- Jaundice - a yellowing of the skin and eyeballs.
- Itchy skin.
- Dark urine.
- Abdominal pain
- Fatigue, nausea and weight loss.
- Some people may have no symptoms.

Understanding your Hep B test results

Hep B surface antigen screen looks to detect a protein that indicates both acute and chronic infection. It may be present before any symptoms appear. If **positive**, further tests may be necessary which your GP will arrange at the hospital. A **negative** result indicates no further action is needed unless you wish to consider vaccination.

Vaccination

A vaccination is available to prevent Hep B. You can discuss this with your general practitioner (doctor). It may be available on the NHS.

2. Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C – Hep C – also affects the liver. It is transmitted mainly through contact with infected blood but is present in other bodily fluids. It is more common in North African and Asian countries.

What are the symptoms?

- Similar to Hep B.
- May include flu-like illness.
- Digestion problems.

Understanding your Hep C test results if positive

One in 5 people clear the virus on their own without treatment. They will have antibodies that show past infection but this does not offer protection for the future.

Four in 5 people may need treatment to protect their liver from long-term damage.

At present, there is no vaccination for Hep C.

Treatment is confidential and offered at a specialist clinic at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

3. HIV

The **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus attacks the immune system and weakens its ability to fight infection and disease.

It can be transmitted through infected blood or unprotected sexual contact.

Treatment is confidential and offered at a specialist clinic.

Further advice:

Contact Respiratory Medicine on: **0118 322 6882** or email rbft.tbservice-refs@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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