



NUCLEIC ACID AMPLIFICATION TEST FOR HIV-I/HCV (HIV-I/HCV NAT) INFORMATION SHEET

All donated blood is tested before it is transfused to a patient. A sample of the donor's blood is tested using two screening tests. One detects antibodies and is called an enzyme immunoassay (EIA); the other detects viral genetic material and is called a Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAT). All blood from donors who test repeatedly reactive (positive) on the EIA test or the NAT test is destroyed and is NOT used for transfusion. For the purposes of counseling, further confirmatory tests may be performed.

What is HIV-I/HCV NAT?

NAT (Nucleic Acid Amplification Technology) is a very sensitive test that allows direct detection of a virus in your blood sample. This test can detect the presence of the HIV-1 and HCV viruses before the body has time to produce antibodies. NAT is part of the routine screening tests performed on each blood donation.

How many types of HIV-I/HCV NAT Tests are performed?

The screening NAT test is a combined test that can detect the presence of either HCV or HIV. If the combined NAT test is positive, a second test specific for each virus, HIV or HCV, is done.

How is NAT performed?

NAT is performed on individual samples directly, or by pooling together samples from a small number of donors. If the test on a NAT pool is reactive, each donor's sample in the pool is tested again individually by NAT, before determining a donor has a reactive NAT result. Once a positive donor sample is identified, the second specific test is performed to determine if the positive result is due to either a HCV or HIV infection.

What is meant by a false-positive test result?

A false-positive NAT test result means that the initial screening test was reactive, but a more specific test for each virus was negative. Almost all false-positive test results occur because of interference with the test and are not due to infection. They are not testing errors. Receiving a false-positive test result can be worrisome and upsetting, but tests that are falsely positive really mean that infection is not present in the blood. If you have any additional concerns, you may speak to your physician who can give you medical advice. Repeat testing may also be discussed with your doctor.