

JC (John Cunningham) Virus

Why should I get tested?

The John Cunningham virus (JCV) is a common virus that is unrelated to multiple sclerosis (MS). Approximately half of the population has been exposed to the virus. Normally the body's immune system keeps JCV inactive.

However, JCV can cause a rare brain infection called progressive multifocal leucoencephalopathy (PML) in people who take medicines that affect the immune system. When choosing an MS treatment, it is important to consider the benefits and risks of treatment in relation to the risks presented by the disease.

You have been asked to have a blood test to determine if you have developed antibodies to the virus. Knowing if you have developed antibodies to the virus will help you and your doctor decide on the most effective way to manage your MS.

How does the test affect my treatment?

Patients who test positive for antibodies to JCV are at a higher risk of developing PML than those that test negative to JCV.

If you test positive for antibodies to JCV, this indicates that you have been exposed to the virus, but it does not mean you will get PML.

If you test negative for antibodies to the virus, you are at the lowest risk of developing PML.

Only patients that test negative for JCV antibodies will require testing in the future (recommendation is every 6 months).

Blood Test

Your doctor will have provided you with a specific request form.

As this test requires a special tube and has special handling requirements, the sample can **only be collected at the collection centres located at The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital Monday to Friday between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm.**

ACT Pathology Collection Centres

The Canberra Hospital – Ph: 5124 2816

Please note as there is no Medicare item for this service there is an associated collection fee of \$30.80. You will be asked to sign a declaration form acknowledging that you are willing to pay for the cost of this service.

How long will the result take?

Your sample will be referred to a laboratory in Denmark for analysis.

Samples are shipped every 4 – 6 weeks and the result should be available from the referral laboratory within 2 weeks of receipt of the sample.

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