

HLA Antibody Information Sheet

What is HLA?

HLA stands for Human Leukocyte Antigen. These antigens are proteins and they are found on most of the cells in our body. Each person has a unique set of HLA antigens.

What is an antibody?

Antibodies are also proteins and they are found in blood. The body's immune system makes HLA antibodies against HLA antigens that are different from its own. These foreign antigens can enter the body through pregnancy, blood transfusions, and transplants. The body also makes other kinds of antibodies when it's exposed to viruses and bacteria. For example, the flu shot you get every year causes your body to make antibodies that protect you from the flu. Antibodies are important because they protect our health and help us fight off infections. However, in rare cases, HLA antibodies in donated blood may be harmful to some transfusion recipients.

Are HLA antibodies harmful?

HLA antibodies are not harmful to the person who made them. However, blood containing HLA antibodies may cause a rare but harmful reaction in some patients.

What should I do if I test positive for HLA antibody?

There is nothing you need to do because this antibody will not harm you. However, depending on whether your previous donations have been associated with certain type of reaction in patients, you may or may not be deferred from donating blood for the community. As a side note, HLA antibody may be important if you need a bone marrow or organ transplantation.

How is blood tested for HLA antibodies?

A sample of your plasma (liquid part of the blood) is mixed with different HLA antigens. If there are HLA antibodies in the plasma, it will react and give a positive result.