The Hep C Antibody Test

Can a positive hep C test be wrong?

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Just about every day, sometimes twice a day, I get emails like the one above, from people who have done Hepatitis C treatment and then get a Hepatitis C Antibody test that shows a POSITIVE result and they think their hep C treatment has failed and that they still have hepatitis C infection.

A positive result from a HCV antibody test does not prove that you have a hep C infection. If you test positive for hep C antibodies and have never been treated for hep C there is about a 75% chance that you have hepatitis C.

But if you have previously been treated for hep C a hep C antibody test is a total waste of time because you will always test positive for hep C antibodies.

What are Hep C Antibodies?

Hepatitis C antibodies are proteins created by your own body's immune system to fight the the hepatitis C virus.

Hep C antibodies a designed to attach to the surface of hep C virus and block the ability of the hep C virus to replicate itself inside your liver. Hep C antibodies fight the hepatitis C virus and in about 25% of cases they are successful and the hep C virus is destroyed and you do not go on to develop chronic hepatitis C.

This always happens in the acute phase of a hep C infection, that is within the first six months from when the virus entered your body. If your immune system can not defeat the virus within the first six months, in the acute phase, its defence has been unsuccessful and the virus will remain active in your body until a pharmaceutical intervention removes it (or you die).

However even after the virus is removed, either by your own immune system or by treatment with hep C drugs, the antibodies will remain in your blood. You will always have hepatitis C antibodies in your blood.

So a hepatitis C antibody test after you have had a successful hepatitis C treatment is a total waste of time because you will always test positive for hep C antibodies.

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