



DIRECT ANTIGLOBULIN TEST (DAT) INFORMATION SHEET

What is a positive DAT?

A positive Direct Antiglobulin Test (DAT) indicates the presence of immunoglobulin or complement (types of proteins) on the surface of the red blood cell. The DAT is performed by adding an antiglobulin serum to the washed red cells of the donor. A DAT is positive if there is agglutination. Approximately 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 14,000 normal blood donors have been reported to have a positive DAT.

What can cause a positive DAT?

A positive DAT may be caused by certain medications such as alpha-methyl dopa, penicillin and cephalothin or viral infections and autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and hemolytic anemia. In many cases, the cause is unknown.

Why do blood centers perform DAT?

Although a positive DAT is rarely of clinical significance to the donor, blood centers perform the test because positive DAT blood may be difficult to match with a patient in need of transfusion.

What should I do if I have a positive DAT?

We do not know the significance of this finding on your health. Many donors with a positive DAT feel healthy and a specific cause is never determined. A few may resolve spontaneously after a period of time (several months). You may wish to discuss this finding with your physician and be evaluated to determine the significance of this test result to your health.

Should a person with a positive DAT donate blood?

A person with a positive DAT is temporarily deferred for 180 days from donating blood for others (allogeneic donation). You are, however, eligible to donate blood for your own use should you ever need surgery in the future. This is called autologous donation. If, after this 180 day waiting period, your doctor's evaluation indicates you are healthy, we will be happy to welcome you back as a valued blood donor.