



December 2007

Herpes Simplex Virus – Discontinuation of IgM Antibody Testing

To Health Care Providers:

As of January 1, 2008, the Ontario Public Health Laboratory (OPHL) will no longer offer IgM antibody testing for Herpes simplex virus (HSV).

The discontinuation of this test is based on several factors:

1. HSV infections are best confirmed by culture of the virus from vesicle fluid or lesion scrapings. Any HSV isolated can be subtyped into HSV type 1 or type 2. These tests are routinely available at the OPHL.
2. Detection of IgM antibodies cannot be used as an indication of acute primary HSV infection because HSV IgM antibodies are produced following reactivation of latent HSV infection.
3. IgM antibodies recognizing one HSV serotype may be produced in response to reactivation of the other HSV serotype and thus the IgM test cannot be used to distinguish between serotypes.

As viral culture is preferred for the confirmation of HSV infections and as the interpretation of the HSV IgM antibody test is problematic, the OPHL will continue to offer viral culture and will discontinue the IgM antibody test.

For Further Information:

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