

## Education

### Antinuclear Antibodies Test

What is the antinuclear antibodies test?

The antinuclear antibodies (ANA) test is done to check your immune system. It measures whether your body's immune system has made antibodies that are attacking your body's own cells.

Another name for this blood test is FANA (fluorescent antinuclear antibodies) screen.

Why is this test done?

This test can help confirm a diagnosis when you have symptoms of an autoimmune disease. It is done to help diagnose systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE, or lupus), as well as lupus that is caused by drugs. Lupus is one of several diseases that may cause arthritis (joint inflammation). This test may also be done to see how well treatment for lupus is working.

How do I prepare for this test?

No special preparation is needed for this test.

How is the test done?

A small amount of blood is taken from your arm with a needle. The blood is collected in tubes and sent to a lab.

Having this test will take just a few minutes of your time. There is no risk of getting AIDS, hepatitis, or any other blood-borne disease from this test.

How will I get the test result?

Ask your health care provider when and how you will get the result of your test.

What does the test result mean?

The result of this test alone is not very helpful. If your test result is positive, you may have an autoimmune disease such as lupus. However, many people who do not have an autoimmune disease have a positive test result because they normally have a small amount of antinuclear antibodies in their blood. It is also possible to have a negative result even though you do have an autoimmune disease. To make a diagnosis, your health care provider usually needs to interpret ANA test results with your symptoms, your exam, and other lab tests.

What if my test result is not normal?

Test results are only one part of a larger picture that takes into account your medical history and current health. Sometimes a test needs to be repeated to check the first result. Talk to your health care provider about your result and ask questions.

If your test result is abnormal, ask your health care provider:

- if you need more tests
- when you need to be tested again.