

Information regarding a recent laboratory issue related to chlamydia results

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

There has been a recent increase in 'false positive' Chlamydia results due to a laboratory problem. A false positive result is when a Chlamydia test result comes back positive, but the person does not actually have the infection.

HOW WAS THIS PROBLEM DISCOVERED?

In Oxford Sexual Health Service, we became aware of an unusual increase in Chlamydia tests coming back positive. In some situations, this did not fit with the person's risk of getting a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) or with any symptoms they had.

We raised this with the laboratory, who undertook a full investigation. This revealed the equipment used to process tests was contaminated.

WHEN DID THE PROBLEM OCCUR?

The issue first started in the last week of August. All tests taken after the 27th of September 2022 are being processed in a different laboratory, and so will not be affected by this issue.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN AFFECTED?

It is more likely that your result could be a 'false positive' if you have no risks whatsoever for infection. However, Chlamydia can still be found, even if you don't think you are at risk. You are more likely (in general) to become infected with Chlamydia if:

- You are aged 15-24 years
- You have a new sexual partner, or you have had more than one sexual partner in the past year
- Your partner (s) tested positive for Chlamydia too
- You do not always use condoms
- You have symptoms related to Chlamydia

If you received a positive result and have already completed treatment, it may be difficult to know if you have had a false positive result or a true positive result, because retesting may be negative due to treatment with antibiotics.

If you have received a positive result and not taken treatment, we would advise retesting with us, or at another service ASAP. You can discuss whether you should still have treatment with your nurse or doctor.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF HAVING A FALSE POSITIVE RESULT?

If you were given a false positive result, you may have had unnecessary antibiotics. The antibiotics used for Chlamydia usually do not cause significant problems or side effects. But if you are worried, please contact Oxfordshire Sexual Health Services to discuss this (**01865 231 231**).

We acknowledge that receiving a false positive result may have caused emotional distress for you or your partner(s). If you have any worries, please contact us. We can arrange a suitable time to talk through your personal situation and any concerns you may have.

WHAT IF MY TEST WAS NEGATIVE – IS THIS ACCURATE?

For patients who have received a negative Chlamydia test result, they can be assured that this is a true negative. No other STI results are thought to be affected.

WHAT IS THE LAB DOING TO ENSURE THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN AGAIN?

An extensive investigation is being undertaken, and whilst this takes place, all tests are being sent to a different lab. STI testing will only recommence once we are assured all possible steps are in place to ensure this incident does not re-occur.

A new machine that tests for Sexually Transmitted Infections has been purchased, and once all relevant checks have taken place, this will replace the existing machine. This upgraded model has advanced safety features to reduce the risk of this happening again.

WHAT IS OXFORD SEXUAL HEALTH DOING FOR THE PATIENTS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED?

All patients who were given a positive Chlamydia test result in the relevant time period are being contacted. They will have the opportunity to discuss this fully with a clinician and to retest.

AND FINALLY...

We are fully aware of the stress a false positive STI result can cause. The microbiology department is truly sorry that this incident has happened, and for any upset it may have caused. If you wish to discuss this further, you can contact **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals)**: Tel: **01865 221473**;
Email: **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**