

**Name of the test**

CA 19-9 (Cancer Antigen 19-9)

**What is this test used for?**

CA 19-9 is a protein which is present on the surface of certain cancer cells. It is mainly associated with pancreatic cancer, but CA 19-9 can be elevated in other cancers and diseases as well. In other words, CA 19-9 is not specific and sensitive enough to be used as a screening test.

This test is usually used for monitoring the pancreatic cancer treatment and detecting recurrence. However, sometimes pancreatic cancer cells are not producing CA 19-9, and in that case, it cannot be used as a marker.

**When is the test ordered?**

CA 19-9 is usually ordered when the patient has pancreatic cancer symptoms. It is often performed along with other tests - CEA, bilirubin, liver panel.

If the patient is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and has elevated CA 19-9, the test may be reordered several times during the treatment, in order to monitor response to therapy.

**How is this test performed?**

A blood sample is taken from a vein.

**How to prepare for the test**

No preparation is needed.

**Interpretation of results**

Low levels of CA 19-9 can be detected in healthy people. CA 19-9 may be temporarily increased due to certain liver or pancreas disorders and they soon return to normal levels.

High levels of CA 19-9 are mainly seen with pancreatic cancer, however some other cancers may also cause elevation of CA 19-9.