

What is an ANA test?

An ANA test is a blood test that looks for antinuclear antibodies (ANA) in the blood.

- The immune system normally makes antibodies to fight off germs and diseases in the body.
- Sometimes the body makes antibodies that recognize some part of a person's own body. If these antibodies attack a person's own body, they may cause autoimmune disease, but this does not always happen.

What does a positive ANA test mean?

A positive ANA test means these antibodies were found in your child's blood. This can sound scary, but it is often not a reason to be concerned.

- Many healthy children have a positive ANA test and do not have an autoimmune disease.
- In a recent large study, only about 7 out of 100 children sent to a pediatric rheumatologist for a positive ANA test actually had an autoimmune disease.

What happens if my child has a positive ANA test?

Your child's doctor will:

- Ask about your child's health history and symptoms.
- Do a physical exam to check for things like joint swelling, rashes, mouth sores or big lymph nodes.
- Sometimes order more blood tests.

The doctor can then decide if the positive ANA test:

- Is benign, meaning your child does not have an autoimmune disease **or**
- May be a sign that an autoimmune disease is starting.

Some children with an autoimmune disease have a negative ANA. This is why doctors do not rely on just one test result.

Key points to remember:

- A positive ANA test alone does not mean your child has lupus, arthritis or any disease.
- It is only one clue, not the whole story. Doctors need more information.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.