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FAST FACTS: Herpes Simplex Serologies

HSV IgM

- Appears 3–10 days after infection
- Persists for 6–8 weeks.
- During reactivations, 5–30% of patients will produce a low-level IgM response.
- IgM is not useful for separating primary from recurrent HSV infections in patients with HSV IgG.
- Many individuals have a low-level IgM response that cannot be correlated with HSV disease.
- Type-specific IgM testing is useless because HSV IgM cross-reacts with HSV-1 and HSV-2.

Neonatal IgM Testing

- HSV IgM can be helpful in diagnosing neonatal infections.
- IgM is usually present 3–4 weeks after birth and persists for up to 1 year.

Type Specific HSV IgG antibodies

- Type-specific HSV IgG may not be detectable for 12–16 weeks after exposure.
- In contrast with traditional (non-type specific) HSV IgG tests where antibody reactivity persists for the patient's lifetime, some patients appear to lose typespecific HSV IgG antibodies over time. (Antibody reactivity to the peptide antigens can wane.)
- Some patients do not produce antibodies to the peptides used in the type-specific HSV IgG tests and testing with the older cross-reactive methodologies may be required.



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