



DROPPING AST FROM THE LFT PROFILE

Currently our Liver Function Tests (LFT) profile contains AST, ALT, GGT, ALP, TBIL, TP and ALB. Many clinical laboratories have dropped AST from their standard LFT profile, including Health Waikato laboratory and Lab Plus in Auckland.

Our laboratories in Hamilton, Tauranga and Whakatane will be following suit shortly. **AST will remain on the list of tests that can be requested individually** but will not be included in the standard LFT profile. In addition **we will automatically add AST when the ALT is significantly elevated (>80U/L).**

We intend to put this change in place with effect from Monday 4th July 2011 so please contact John Woodford at Pathlab if you have any concerns regarding this change.

HETEROPHILE ANTIBODIES

Heterophile antibodies are antibodies that the body produces to poorly defined antigens. Often when people come into close contact with animals they develop antibodies to those animal antigens. Human anti-animal antibodies sometimes interfere with immunological assays tested in the laboratory and generate inaccurate results.

The presence of heterophile antibodies is very difficult to detect in the laboratory as the effect of these antibodies varies between individuals and the testing platform. Indications include:

- Test results that do not change after treatment (example – LH & FSH remain high despite androgen replacement)
- Test results that do not fit with the clinical picture (example very high TSH with normal FT4 no symptoms of hypothyroidism)
- Markedly different results for the same test performed at different laboratories.
- Tests that do not show expected change (example TNI or hCG results that remain slightly elevated for extended periods)

We have put in place a number of measures to try to pick up patients with heterophile antibodies and to test for their presence. We are not however privy to treatment regimes and clinical presentations. Please be vigilant when interpreting immunological tests and consider the presence of heterophile antibodies or other interfering substances if results are unexpected. We are always happy to undertake further investigations to check for interfering substances if you consider the result 'suspect'.