Abacavir, a nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor used to treat HIV and AIDS, can cause hypersensitivity reactions. A genetic test for HLA-B*5701 can identify patients at risk.

Why should you test for hypersensitivity? Although fewer than 10 per cent of patients are affected by hypersensitivity reactions, the outcomes can be severe and sometimes fatal. The symptoms include skin rash, fever, and gastrointestinal and respiratory symptoms, and patients who experience any signs of drug allergy or sensitivity are advised to stop taking the drug.

Does screening for HLA-B*5701 improve treatment outcomes?
Recent research has confirmed that the hypersensitivity is associated with the HLA-B*5071 genetic variation. A study of nearly 2000 patients from Europe and Australia found that screening for HLA-B*5701, before administering Abacavir, halved the risk of hypersensitivity reactions.


ADDITIONAL NOTE
Abacavir is available under the trade name Ziagen™ (GlaxoSmithKline) and in the combination formulations Trizivir™ (abacavir, zidovudine and lamivudine) and Kivexa®/Epzicom™ (abacavir and lamivudine).

Sample Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample type</th>
<th>Turnaround Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HLA-B*5701</td>
<td>HL57</td>
<td>1 x EDTA whole blood</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
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</tbody>
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TDL Genetics
60 Whitfield Street, London W1T 4EU
Telephone: 020 7307 7409 Fax: 020 7307 7350
E-mail: tdigenetics@tdlpathology.com
Website: www.tdlpathology.com

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