



## DRIED BLOOD SPOT: A SAMPLE COLLECTION METHOD FOR HCV THAT CAN MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

### What is the Dried Blood Spot (DBS) method?

DBS is a way of gathering a blood sample for hepatitis C testing. With DBS, the person being tested just needs to have a finger pricked, no locating veins or tubes of blood required.

Like traditional blood draws, DBS samples can be used for HCV antibody and RNA testing. DBS samples can also be used to test for other infections like hepatitis B, HIV, and syphilis. While samples can be collected almost anywhere, cards must be sent to a laboratory that accepts dried blood samples in order to be tested and yield results. (You'll need to contact your usual laboratory to determine whether they test dried blood samples.)



### How is a DBS sample collected and tested?

After pricking a person's finger with a lancet, blood is carefully dripped onto a card made of filter paper with pre-printed circles on it, without letting the finger touch the paper. The blood should fill each circle completely until the spots are visible on the back side of the card. Samples can be self-collected or collected by another person. Once it's dry, the card is sent to a laboratory for testing and the collector tells the lab which infections to test for.

### Who can collect a DBS sample?

Non-clinical staff (e.g. community health workers) can collect a DBS sample wherever a person is (at an encampment, at a pharmacy, in prison). Training on how to properly collect samples<sup>1</sup> and how to counsel people being tested<sup>2</sup> is recommended.

### Are there any potential drawbacks to using the DBS method?

The amount of blood required may require several finger pricks, which can be difficult to obtain for some people. Additionally, because only a little blood is collected, sample quality is especially important. Lab equipment is less sensitive to dried blood, so it may not be able to detect very low levels of the hep C virus' RNA, which could lead to a false negative on a test given to confirm a chronic infection. Finally, results are typically available within 3 to 5 days, but turnaround time varies by laboratory and may be more than a week.

### Does the DBS method require any special storage or shipping?

It's easy to store and transport collected samples, which are stable at room temperature for a certain amount of time. Samples must be mailed using a triple-packaging system usually provided by the laboratory testing them.



## DRIED BLOOD SPOT: A SAMPLE COLLECTION METHOD FOR HCV THAT CAN MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

### Who pays for DBS sample testing?

If the person being tested has insurance, it may be possible to bill their insurance for the cost of supplies, shipping, and sample processing. However, some insurance companies require a contract with the laboratory or require a medical provider to order the testing.

If the person is uninsured or their insurance will not cover DBS testing, there may be grant funding available to support testing costs.

### How can I learn more about DBS and get information about service provision?

For a deeper dive into the DBS method, check out [this guide](#) from the International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users. For considerations around logistics and financing, organizations that have successfully added DBS to their roster of services ([Central City Concern](#), [Indiana Recovery Alliance](#), [Molecular Testing Labs](#), [Wadsworth Center](#)) have some of the most detailed and useful advice available.

<sup>1</sup> Testing manufacturers and laboratories may be able to provide training on DBS collection.

<sup>2</sup> Your state or local public health department or a local hepatitis C-experienced clinician may be able to provide training on how to conduct pre- and post-test counseling. Self-guided training on hepatitis C is also available at [hepatitisc.uw.edu](http://hepatitisc.uw.edu).

*Special thanks to NVHR's [Viral Hepatitis Diagnostics Working Group](#), whose knowledge and collective input were essential to the creation of this resource.*

*Interested in advocating for hepatitis B and C point-of-care tests and attending our monthly meetings to coordinate those efforts? Email [adrienne@nvhr.org](mailto:adrienne@nvhr.org) to join the working group and receive the calendar invite for our next meeting.*

### About NVHR

The [National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable](#), an initiative of [HEP](#), is a national coalition fighting for an equitable world free of viral hepatitis. NVHR seeks to eliminate viral hepatitis in the United States and improve the lives of those affected through advocacy, education, and support to national, state and local partners. For more information, visit [www.nvhr.org](http://www.nvhr.org).