



## *The Medical* **Bulletin**

### In Rheumatology

#### **HLA B27**

Back pain is a very common complaint and 95% of HLA B27 positive people will NOT develop ankylosing spondylitis, therefore testing HLA B27 in patients with back pain in general is not useful.

HLA B27 testing is most useful when a patient has back pain with inflammatory features (age of onset < 40 years, pain improves with exercise, does not improve with rest). Suspicion for inflammatory back pain is increased in patients with a history of uveitis, inflammatory bowel disease, psoriasis or family history of ankylosing spondylitis.

#### **Pitfalls:**

HLA B27 negativity does not rule out spondylarthritis. Up to 10% of Caucasian patients with ankylosing Spondylitis is HLA B27 negative. HLA-B27 negative spondylarthritis is > common in non-Caucasian ethnic groups.

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