

US okays Roche test to identify HIV, hepatitis viruses

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US authorities have approved a test developed by Swiss pharmaceutical firm Roche that can detect both HIV and hepatitis viruses, the company said Friday.

The Cobas Taqscreen MPX is the only test approved by the US Food and Drug Administration that can simultaneously detect the HIV, hepatitis B and C viruses in human blood and plasma, Roche said.

Having a single test eliminates "the need for consecutive rounds of testing" Roche said, stressing that it could shorten the time it takes to reach a crucial diagnosis of the killer viruses.

The [human immunodeficiency virus](#) (HIV) which causes AIDS, has killed some 39 million people since it emerged in the 1980s.

Hepatitis B and C, which are transmitted from infected mothers to newborn babies by unsafe injections during medical procedures and drug use, or [unsafe sex](#), kill more than a million people each year.

Roche is a leader in the global blood and plasma screening market using so-called nucleic acid-based techniques, which allow earlier detection of virus or bacteria infections in antibody tests.

That market is worth an estimated 660 million euros (\$779 million) worldwide.

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