



The Florida ESRD Network

Interpretation of Hepatitis B Test Results

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) tests identify substances in the blood that indicate whether a hepatitis B infection is active or has occurred in the past. The tests look for different signs of infection (markers). It is important to identify the type of hepatitis virus causing infection to prevent spread and select the proper treatment.

Antigens are markers made by bacteria or viruses. The presence of HBV antigens means the virus is in the body. Antibodies are proteins produced by the body to fight infection. The presence of HBV antibodies indicates recent or long past exposure to the hepatitis B virus at some time. Genetic material (DNA) of the hepatitis B virus shows that the virus is in the body, and the amount of DNA can help determine how severe the infection is and how easily the HBV infection can be spread.

- Hepatitis B surface antigen (HbsAg) is a protein antigen produced by HBV. It is an early indicator of hepatitis B infection, and usually identifies infection before symptoms appear. Its presence indicates either acute or chronic HBV infection.
- Hepatitis B e-antigen (HbeAg) is an HBV protein only present during an active HBV infection and indicates the presence of virus that can be passed to others. Testing for this antigen can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of treatment for HBV.
- Hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs / HbsAb) Presence indicates previous exposure to HBV or successful vaccination. A positive result indicates immunity to hepatitis B against future HBV infection.
- Total hepatitis B core antibody (anti-HBc) appears at the onset of symptoms in acute hepatitis B and persists for life. The presence of anti-HBc indicates previous or ongoing infection with hepatitis B virus in an undefined time frame.
- IgM antibody to hepatitis B core antigen (IgM anti-HBc) Positivity indicates recent infection with hepatitis B virus (≤ 6 mos). Its presence indicates acute infection and usually is ordered subsequently to the core antigen.

The Florida ESRD Network (Network 7) is providing this fax blast as a technical assistance activity for the Florida renal community.

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