

## ***Hepatitis B Blood Tests***

Is there a blood test for hepatitis B?

What three tests make up the "hepatitis B blood panel"?

What is the hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)?

What is the hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb)?

What is the hepatitis B core antibody (HBcAb)?

I donated blood and received a letter from the blood bank, what does it mean?

### **Is there a blood test for hepatitis B?**

There is a simple hepatitis B blood test that your doctor or health clinic can order called the "hepatitis B blood panel". This blood sample can be taken in the doctor's office.

There are 3 common tests that make up this blood panel. Sometimes the doctor may ask to check your blood again six months after your first visit to confirm your hepatitis B status. If you think you have been recently infected with hepatitis B, it will take 4 -6 weeks before the virus will be detected in your blood.

Understanding your hepatitis B blood test results can be confusing, so you want to be clear about your diagnosis – are you infected with hepatitis B, have you recovered from a hepatitis B infection, or do you have a chronic hepatitis B infection?

In addition, it is helpful if you request a written copy of your blood tests so that you fully understand which tests are positive or negative.

### **What three tests make up the "hepatitis B blood panel"?**

The hepatitis B blood panel requires only one blood sample but includes three tests that are needed to make a final diagnosis:

- **HBsAg** (hepatitis B surface antigen)
- **HBsAb or Anti-HBs** (hepatitis B surface antibody)
- **HBcAb or anti-HBc** (hepatitis B core antibody)

**What is the hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)?**

A "positive" HBsAg test result means that the person is infected with the hepatitis B virus, which can be an "acute" or a "chronic" infection. Infected people can pass the virus on to others through their blood.

**What is the hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb or anti-HBs)?**

A "positive" HBsAb (or anti-HBs) test result indicates that a person has successfully responded to the hepatitis B vaccine or has recovered from an acute hepatitis B infection. This result means that you are immune to future hepatitis B infection and you are not contagious.

**What is the hepatitis B core antibody (HBcAb)?**

The HBcAb is an antibody that is part of the virus- it does not provide protection. A "positive" or "reactive" HBcAb (or anti-HBc) test result indicates a past or present infection. The interpretation of this test result depends on the results of the other two tests. Its appearance with the protective surface antibody (positive HBsAb or anti-HBs) indicates prior infection and recovery. For chronically infected persons, it will usually appear with the virus (positive HBsAg).