

# Hepatitis B Surface Antigen with Reflex

The Hepatitis B Surface Antigen (HBsAg) with Reflex to Confirmation detects the HBsAg protein on the surface of the hepatitis B virus (HBV) during an acute or chronic HBV infection.

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B is transmitted when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sexual contact; sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; or from mother to baby at birth. For some people, hepatitis B is an acute, or short-term, illness but for others, it can become a long-term, chronic infection.

## What is the difference between an acute and chronic illness?

Acute hepatitis B refers to a short-term infection that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is infected with the virus. The infection can range in severity from a mild illness with few or no symptoms to a serious condition requiring hospitalization. Some people, especially adults, are able to clear, or get rid of, the virus without treatment. People who clear the virus become immune and cannot get infected with the hepatitis B virus again.

Chronic hepatitis B refers to a lifelong infection with the hepatitis B virus. The likelihood that a person develops a chronic infection depends on the age at which someone becomes infected. Up to 90% of infants infected with the hepatitis B virus will develop a chronic infection. In contrast, about 5% of adults will develop chronic HBV. Over time, chronic hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death.

## Who should be tested for HBV?

Although anyone can get hepatitis B, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends testing for HBV for anyone in the following categories:

- All pregnant women
- Household and sexual contact of people with HBV
- People born in certain parts of the world that have increased risk of HBV
- People with HIV, receive chemotherapy, or are on hemodialysis
- People who inject drugs
- Men who have sex with men

## What are the symptoms of HBV?

Many people with hepatitis B do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected. If symptoms occur, they can include:

- Fever
- Dark urine
- Grey-colored stool
- Loss of appetite
- Upset stomach
- Joint pain
- Tiredness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Jaundice

## Can HBV be prevented?

Yes. The best way to prevent hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated. The hepatitis B vaccine is typically given as a series of 3 shots over a period of 6 months. The entire series is needed for long-term protection.

*See other side for more information on the Hepatitis B Surface Antigen test.*

## Who should get vaccinated against HBV?

The CDC recommends that all infants be vaccinated. The vaccine is also recommended for people living with someone infected with hepatitis B, travelers to certain countries, and healthcare and public safety workers exposed to blood. People with high-risk sexual behaviors, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and people who have certain medical conditions, including diabetes, should talk to a healthcare provider about getting vaccinated.

## What type of HBV test is being performed?

The blood test being performed is a Hepatitis B Surface Antigen (HBsAg) with Reflex to Confirmation. HBsAg is a protein on the surface of the hepatitis B virus. It can be detected in the blood during acute or chronic HBV infection. The body normally produces antibodies to HBsAg as part of the normal immune response to infection.

## What's the difference between the antibody test and the surface antigen test?

The antibody test detects substances that were produced in response to the HBV virus, either through acute infection or immunization.

The antigen test looks for HBsAg, a protein on the surface of the hepatitis B virus, so the antigen test can detect an active infection. The antigen test can also be used to identify chronic infections.

## What should I do if my results are positive or negative?

It is always recommended you meet with a healthcare provider to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your healthcare provider will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, will be able to provide an accurate picture of your health status.

**If your results were positive:** If your test is positive, you have an acute or chronic HBV infection and can pass the virus on to others. You should talk to your healthcare provider about treatment options and/or further testing to determine if you have an acute or chronic infection.

**If your results were negative:** Since this test reflexes to a confirmation, a negative test result means there is no hepatitis B virus in your blood. If you have symptoms or other concerns, you should speak to your healthcare provider to discuss additional testing options.

## What other resources are available to learn more about my health and laboratory tests?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- Lab Tests Online: [labtestsonline.org](http://labtestsonline.org)
- Quest Diagnostics: [questdiagnostics.com](http://questdiagnostics.com)

*DLO Direct offers direct access to laboratory testing for informational purposes. A DLO Direct lab test result is not a medical diagnosis and is not intended as medical advice. Only a healthcare provider can interpret lab results and diagnose a medical condition or disease.*

*Because tests have not been ordered by a healthcare provider, third party entities, including Medicare and Medicaid, will not reimburse for these tests.*



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