

Easy B Facts

What Is the “e” Antigen (HBeAg)?

To find out how your hepatitis B infection is progressing, a blood sample will be taken and examined for antigens – proteins that make up the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Your doctor will also look for antibodies – cells that your immune system creates to fight each hepatitis B antigen

If you test positive for the “e” antibody, but continue to have elevated ALT and high viral load (HBV DNA), you may have HBeAg-negative hepatitis B.

Your doctor will be especially interested in the “e” antigen (called HBeAg). When you have the “e” antigen it means HBV is multiplying in your liver. HBV also produces “e” antigen as it multiplies. It also means you have lots of HBV in your blood and body fluids, so you must take precautions to prevent infecting others.

When you have the “e” antigen, your liver can become damaged by the HBV replicating in your liver. Children with hepatitis B often test positive for the HBeAg because their immune system has not yet noticed or tried to fight the hepatitis B virus.

The goal of most medical treatments is to get your body to produce the “e” antibody. Having “e” antibodies usually means you have less HBV damaging your liver.

Some adults have HBV that is able to reproduce without the “e” antigen. This type of infection is called HBeAg negative hepatitis B. Someone with this type of infection can have the “e” antibody, but still have lots of HBV in their bodies.



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