

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVER HEALTH BLOOD TESTS

People with chronic hepatitis B are at risk of liver failure and liver cancer. Long-term regular blood test monitoring checks for early signs of these conditions and has been shown to reduce morbidity and mortality.

This monitoring is free for New Zealand residents through the Hepatitis Foundation. We recommend all GPs encourage any patients living with chronic hepatitis B to access this vital service.

Tests include:

- **Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP).** This is a liver cancer tumour marker test. If results show an elevated AFP level, please seek advice from our clinicians or your local gastroenterology service
- **Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg).** This determines whether there is continued viral infection
- **Hepatitis B e-antigen (HBeAg).** This checks the level of infection. A positive result indicates there is a high level of infection
- **Liver function tests (LFTs).** These check for active liver inflammation. Anti-viral medication may be considered depending on results.

Everyone with hepatitis B needs regular monitoring. We recommend six-monthly blood tests to assess liver health as a minimum. Subsequent frequency of testing will depend on results.

Not everyone with hepatitis B needs treatment. Our clinical team can advise you on how and when to treat people with the virus. If further assessment or treatment is needed, we can refer patients to secondary care.

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