

# Hepatitis B Fact Sheet

## What is Hepatitis B?

A viral infection that affects the liver and is spread primarily through contact with infected blood, semen, or other bodily fluids. Many cases are mild and most people recover within 6-months. Some people go on to become carriers for the rest of their lives (chronic carriers), possibly infecting others. Chronic carriers may develop long-term liver disease and possibly liver cancer. You can test for this virus with a blood test.

## How is Hepatitis B Spread?

Hepatitis B is more infectious than HIV and can be passed through:

- Vaginal, anal, and oral sex (most common way adults and adolescents get Hepatitis B)
- Sharing needles and syringes
- Tattooing and body piercing
- Sharing razors and toothbrushes
- Childbirth (infected mom passes Hepatitis B to baby)
- It is **NOT** spread by hugging, kissing, or sharing food or drink

## Symptoms of Hepatitis B

On average symptoms appear 6 weeks to 6 months after exposure and last a few weeks to a few months. Most people do not feel sick at all. Symptoms include:

- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Joint and muscle pain
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine and light colored stools
- Feeling ill (malaise)

## Who is at risk?

- Injection drug users
- Sex partners of infected persons
- Having sex without a condom with multiple sex partners
- Being a male who has sex with males without a condom
- Family and household of infected persons
- Healthcare workers
- Infants born to infected mothers
- Traveling to countries with high rates of Hepatitis B
- Receiving hemodialysis

## Treating Hepatitis B

Anyone can get hepatitis B. To protect against infection, a vaccine is available. The hepatitis B vaccine provides excellent protection against infection and is given in a series of three to four injections over six months.

- **For acute (new or short duration) hepatitis B infections:** There is no medication to treat acute hepatitis B. Healthcare providers recommend rest, fluids and eating a healthy diet. More serious cases will need to be hospitalized.
- **For chronic (long-term) hepatitis B infection:** Anyone with chronic hepatitis B should be referred to a healthcare provider with specialized experience in treating hepatitis and liver diseases. There are several medications available to treat chronic hepatitis B, but not every case requires treatment. It is important that a patient with chronic hepatitis B is checked often to make sure their liver is healthy. A person with hepatitis B should avoid alcohol and should consult with a healthcare provider before taking any supplements or over-the-counter medications (as some of these products can damage the liver).

More Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm>



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## Pregnancy and Hepatitis B

Pregnant women seeking prenatal care will receive a series of routine blood tests, including one that tests for the presence of hepatitis B. If a pregnant woman tests positive, she can pass hepatitis B to her baby during childbirth. This can be prevented by giving the infant hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) and the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine within the 12 hours of birth. Two or three additional doses of the vaccine are needed over the next six months to help prevent hepatitis B. The timing and total number of shots will depend on the baby's age and birth weight.

Even if a pregnant woman is not positive for Hepatitis B, the vaccine is recommended for all infants. The first dose is usually given after birth before the infant leaves the hospital.

Most babies with Hepatitis B do not have symptoms, but they can develop chronic Hepatitis B, which can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.

## How is Hepatitis B Prevented?

- The best way is to be vaccinated; it is a series of 3 shots over a 6 month period
- Do not share needles, razors, toothbrushes, chewing gum, nail clippers, washcloths, piercing equipment, or diabetic testing equipment (or any object that could be contaminated with blood or other body fluids).
- Don't use IV drugs; If you do use IV drugs, seek help from a treatment program to stop and NEVER share drug works equipment
- Use condoms the right way (a new one every time with water-based lubricant) and every time you have sex
- If you are a healthcare worker, follow universal standard precautions; handle needles and other sharps safely
- Clean contaminated surfaces wearing latex gloves with disinfectant (1 part regular household bleach to 10 parts water)
- Make sure tattoo and piercing artists clean their tools properly and wear new gloves with each new customer

## In addition, if you have hepatitis B:

- Don't donate blood, plasma, body parts or sperm
- Cover open sores or other breaks in your skin
- Be tested to see if you are a chronic carrier
- Don't share objects that could be contaminated with blood or body fluids
- Don't pre-chew food for babies or others
- Tell your sex partner(s) you have hepatitis B so they can be tested and vaccinated (if not already infected or vaccinated). Partner should be tested for adequate anti-HBs one to two months (no sooner and no later) after three doses of vaccine are completed to be sure the vaccine worked
- Use a new condom every time you have sex
- Throw away used personal items, such as tissues or menstrual pads, in a bag that does not leak so others will not be exposed to your blood
- Wash your hands well after touching your blood or body fluids
- Tell household members to see their doctors for testing and vaccination of hepatitis B
- Know that if someone is exposed to your blood; be it a family member, a friend, or even a stranger - preventative treatment is available for that person. If the exposed person receives HBIG and starts the hepatitis B vaccine series right away (or within 7-14 days depending on the type of exposure) that person has an excellent chance of being protected from hepatitis B
- See your doctor regularly for evaluation and follow-up for hepatitis B as directed
- If you are pregnant tell your doctor that you have hepatitis B infection; it is critical that your baby is started on hepatitis B vaccine and HBIG within a few hours of birth

***This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call the Lenawee County Health Department (517) 264-5238***

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