

Hepatitis B

1. What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a highly contagious (spreads person-to-person) liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (germ).

- **Acute Hepatitis B:** a short-term infection that happens within the first 6 months after contact with the virus. Acute infection can lead to chronic infection, but some people are able to get rid of the virus and become immune (can't get infected again).
- **Chronic Hepatitis B:** a lifelong infection with the hepatitis B virus that stays in the body. Over time, it can cause serious health problems including liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.

2. How does Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B spreads when infected blood, semen, or other bodily fluids enter the body of a person who isn't infected. It can be spread by:

- Being born to a mother who has hepatitis B
- Having sex with infected person
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other items to inject drugs
- Being exposed to blood or open sores of an infected person
- Sharing razors or toothbrushes with an infected person

3. Who is at risk for Hepatitis B?

Anyone can get hepatitis B, but these groups can have a higher risk:

- Infants born to infected mothers
- People who have sex with an infected person
- People travelling to countries where hepatitis B is common
- Patients on hemodialysis (treatment for kidney failure)
- People who inject drugs
- Men who have sex with men

4. What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Some people don't have symptoms and don't need treatment. If symptoms occur with an acute infection, they usually appear within 3 months of exposure and can last up to 6 months. If symptoms occur with chronic hepatitis B, they can take years to develop and can be a sign of advanced liver disease. Symptoms can include:

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| • Fever | • Vomiting | • Grey stool |
| • Feeling tired | • Stomach pain | • Joint pain |
| • Loss of appetite | • Dark urine | • Yellowing of the |
| • Upset stomach | (pee) | skin and eyes |

5. How is Hepatitis B treated?

Treatment for acute hepatitis B includes rest, proper nutrition, fluids, or close monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized. People with chronic hepatitis B should be evaluated and monitored often.

6. How can Hepatitis B be prevented?

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated. The hepatitis B vaccine is given as a series of 3 shots over 6 months. The vaccine is safe and effective. Call 2-1-1 to find a local clinic or doctor.



Who should get tested:

- All pregnant women
- Household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B
- People born in certain parts of the world that have increased hepatitis B
- People who have HIV, receive chemotherapy and people on dialysis
- People who inject drugs
- Men who have sex with men

For more information:

**Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health**
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/DiseaseSpecific/Hepatitis_B.htm

**California Department of
Public Health**
<https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/HepatitisB.aspx>

**Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)**
<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm>