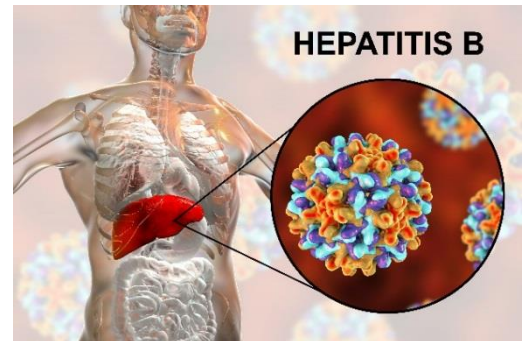


Hepatitis B

1. What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a 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 is the hepatitis B virus spread?

The hepatitis B virus is spread when infected blood, semen, or other body fluids from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected. The virus can spread through:

- Sexual activity: Having sexual contact with an infected person can spread the virus.
- Injection drug use: Sharing needles, syringes, and other equipment with someone infected with hepatitis B can spread the virus.
- Outbreaks: While uncommon, poor infection control has resulted in outbreaks of hepatitis B in healthcare settings.
- Birth: Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

3. What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Many people with hepatitis B do not have any symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dark urine (pee)
- Grey-colored stools
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes)

4. How soon do symptoms of hepatitis B appear?

When people are first infected, symptoms usually appear within 3 months of exposure and can last up to 6 months, although many people do not have symptoms. Some people, especially adults, are able to clear or get rid of the virus without treatment. Other people will develop chronic hepatitis B infection, or a lifelong infection with the hepatitis B virus. If symptoms occur with chronic hepatitis B, they can take years to develop.

Key Points:

- Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus.
- Hepatitis B spreads through infected blood, semen or body fluids from an infected person to someone that is not infected.
- Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting and spreading hepatitis B.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health**
<http://ph.lacounty.gov/acd/RespondHepC>

California Department of Public Health
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/Hepatitis-B.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv>

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5. What complications can hepatitis B cause?

Over time, hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death.

6. How long can an infected person spread the virus?

An infected person can spread the virus for several weeks before symptoms appear and if the person is ill. People who develop lifelong infections may spread the virus their entire lives.

7. Is there a treatment for hepatitis B?

For those with acute hepatitis B, doctors usually recommend rest, proper nutrition, fluids, and close medical monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized. People living with chronic hepatitis B should be evaluated for liver problems and monitored on a regular basis. Treatments are available that can slow down or prevent the effects of liver disease.

8. How would you know if you have hepatitis B?

The only way to know if you have hepatitis B is to get a blood test. Blood tests can determine if a person has been infected and cleared the virus, is currently infected, or has never been infected.

9. Is there a vaccine for the prevention of hepatitis B?

A vaccine is available and is recommended for all infants at birth, as well as for people at high risk of being infected with hepatitis B.

10. If my test comes back positive for hepatitis B, what should I do?

Go see your doctor, who will determine what treatment you need. Treatment can help you stay healthy and reduce your risk of liver cancer.

11. How do I protect my family?

Your family members and sexual partners should talk to their doctor about hepatitis B testing. If they have hepatitis B, they may need treatment. If they do not have hepatitis B, they need a vaccine to prevent hepatitis B.