



Hepatitis B: The Facts

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The Facts

Hepatitis B virus (called Hep B for short) is the world’s most common liver infection. Hep B is transmitted from one person to another through infected blood and body fluids, usually by having sex, sharing needles, or from a mother to her newborn during birth.

The information in this booklet is mainly intended for people with chronic hepatitis B. It can help you learn more about Hep B so you can make the best decisions for your health and avoid passing the virus to other people.

ACUTE VS. CHRONIC HEPATITIS B

There are 2 kinds of Hep B. The **acute form of hepatitis is the initial infection**. Most people will recover fully from this initial infection and can never get it again. In the **chronic form**, the virus stays in your body and can continue to cause problems.

Most people (90%) diagnosed with Hep B have the acute form and recover fully. Anyone who continues to test positive for Hep B for more than 6 months is considered to have the chronic form.



IF YOU HAVE CHRONIC HEPATITIS B

If you do have chronic Hep B, you are not alone—approximately 1.25 million people in the United States also have it. Most infected people feel healthy for their entire lives. Some people with chronic Hep B, however, do have long-term effects and develop liver damage, including liver scarring (cirrhosis), liver failure, or liver cancer. With proper care, many of these problems can be avoided.

Taking Care of YOU

There are many things you can do to help yourself stay healthy if you have chronic Hep B.

- **Do not drink alcohol.** This is very important. Alcohol can damage your liver.
- **Eat healthy and maintain a healthy weight.** Eat at least 5 servings of fruits or vegetables a day.
- **Rest.** Try to get a full night's sleep every night and take naps on days you feel really tired. Your body stays healthier when it is well rested.
- **Exercise.** Exercise can help you release stress, maintain a healthy weight, and get the energy you need. Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity (such as a brisk walk) at least 5 days a week. If you are not used to exercising, start slowly. Even a small amount of exercise can help you feel healthier. Your doctor can help you decide what's right for you. Remember, you should check with your doctor before starting any form of exercise.
- **Talk about your feelings.** Finding out that you have Hep B can be overwhelming. You may feel scared, sad, angry, confused, and upset. These feelings are normal and can get better with time. Talking about your feelings and taking steps to take care of yourself and stay healthy can help. However, if your feelings don't get better, or if they stop you from doing your daily activities, you may be having symptoms of depression. Talk to your doctor and people close to you so you can get the support and help you may need.
- **Get help if you have depression or a drug or alcohol problem.** You can get help. LIFENET is free and available 24 hours/7 days a week. Call 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638)

Get the Right Medical Care

- See a doctor who knows about Hep B. People with chronic Hep B need regular check-ups.
- Talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated against hepatitis A, a separate infection that can damage your liver. The vaccine is safe and effective, and can help you stay healthy.
- Have your liver checked once or twice a year. Certain blood tests need to be performed to monitor your liver's health.
- Check with your doctor before taking any medicines. Even some over-the-counter and herbal medicines can injure your liver.

Treating Hepatitis B

Treatment for chronic Hep B can be expensive and can cause side effects—not everyone with chronic Hep B needs treatment. Discuss the options with a doctor who knows about Hep B (such as a gastroenterologist or hepatologist) to decide if you need treatment.

If you have chronic Hep B and your liver disease progresses, here are some extra precautions you should take:

- Get a flu vaccine every year.
- Get a pneumonia vaccine.
- Don't eat raw oysters as they may carry bacteria that can cause an infection in people with liver disease.



Avoid Spreading Hep B to Others

Other people can get Hep B by coming in contact with your blood, semen, or vaginal fluids. Therefore:

- Your close contacts (household, sexual, or injection partners) should be tested for Hep B — and be vaccinated if they are not already immune.
- Use condoms until your sex partners are completely vaccinated against Hep B.
- If you inject street drugs, never share needles, syringes, cotton, cups, ties, water, or cookers. This can also prevent other infections.
- Tell your doctors, dentists, and other health care providers that you are infected with Hep B.
- Cover all cuts and open sores with bandages.
- Throw away used bandages or menstrual pads in a plastic bag so others will not be exposed to your blood.
- Wash your hands well after touching your blood or body fluids.
- Clean up any blood spills with a bleach solution (1 part regular household bleach to 10 parts water).
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, needles, nail files, clippers, nail scissors, washcloths, or anything that may have come in contact with your blood or bodily fluids.
- Do not donate blood, body organs, tissue, or sperm.
- Do not share food that has been in your mouth (e.g., chewing gum) and do not pre-chew food for babies.
- Preventive treatment is available for anyone who may have been exposed to Hep B. Contact a physician right away if you think this may have happened.

Sweat, urine, feces, and breast milk do **not** transmit Hep B. You **cannot** spread Hep B by sneezing, coughing, kissing or hugging, or sharing eating utensils, drinking glasses, food or water. You cannot spread it by casual contact, such as shaking hands, or talking. People with Hep B should not be excluded from work, school, play, child care, or other settings



Hepatitis B and Pregnancy

- Hep B can be spread from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth.
- All pregnant women should be screened for Hep B using a test called the hepatitis B surface antigen test.
- If you have Hep B, there are medicines that can help prevent your baby from getting Hep B.
- All women who are pregnant and have a positive Hep B test can receive help from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Hepatitis B Perinatal Program to prevent their baby from getting Hep B. For more information, call: (718) 520-8245.
- All newborns should get the full Hep B vaccine series even if the mother does not have Hep B.
- If your baby is infected with Hep B, there is a high risk that he or she may develop a chronic infection.

Pregnancy

Understanding Hepatitis B Testing

Hep B blood tests can be confusing. It is important to discuss your test results with your doctor so that you can clearly understand whether you have a new (acute) infection, chronic infection, or have recovered from an acute infection.

Basic Terms

Antigen: A protein on the surface of a virus that can stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies.

Antibody: A protein that your immune system makes in response to infection or vaccination. Antibodies usually protect a person against future infections.

Common Hepatitis B Tests

Hep B Surface Antigen (HBsAg)

People with a positive result are infected and can pass the virus to others. Those who test positive for more than 6 months usually have a chronic infection.

Hep B Core Antibody IgM (HBcIgM)

People who test positive usually have a new (acute) infection.

Hep B Core Antibody total (anti-HBc)

People who test positive have either a new, chronic, or resolved infection.

Hep B Surface Antibody (anti-HBs)

People who test positive are protected against hepatitis B – either because they were vaccinated or had hepatitis B once and can't get it again.

Hep B "e" antigen (HBeAg)

People who test positive usually have high levels of virus in their blood and can very easily pass the virus to others.

Hep B "e" antibody (HBeAb)

People who test positive may have a current or past infection.

Hep B DNA (HBV DNA)

People who test positive are usually infected and can pass the virus to others.

Tests to Evaluate Your Liver:

Liver Function Tests (LFTs)

These blood tests show how your liver is working. The most important tests are:

Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT), also called SGPT

Aspartate Aminotransferase (AST), also called SGOT

These 2 enzymes, if elevated, show liver damage, and are included in the regular monitoring of all chronic hepatitis B patients.

Other Tests

Alkaline phosphatase (Alk. Phos.)

- An enzyme that indicates obstruction of the biliary (bile) system, either within the liver or in the larger bile channels outside the liver.

Liver Biopsy

- The removal of a small piece of tissue from the liver using a special needle. The tissue is examined under a microscope to look for liver damage.

Ultrasound or Sonogram

- A picture that shows if there are changes in the shape of the liver. This is used to find tumors in the liver.

Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP)

- Increased levels may indicate liver cancer.



RESOURCES

English

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Call 311 or visit: Health Topics A–Z www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdhepc.shtml

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1-800-232-4636 or www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

American Liver Foundation

1-800-465-4837 or www.liverfoundation.org

Hepatitis Foundation International

1-800-891-0707 or www.hepfi.org

Hepatitis B Foundation

215-489-4900 or www.hepb.org (*only English*)

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

Phone: 1-800-891-5389 or

http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepb_ez/index.htm

Immunization Action Coalition

651-647-9009 or www.immunize.org

Asian American Hepatitis B Program

(A community based partnership against hepatitis B funded by the City of New York)

www.bfreenyc.org/

Veterans Affairs – National Hepatitis C Program

www.hepatitis.va.gov

Free NYC Condoms

Call 311

Harm Reduction Coalition:

Harm Reduction Project: www.harmreduction.org

Needle Exchange Programs in NYC: http://hepcproject.typepad.com/hep_c_project/2005/09/needle_exchange.html

Spanish/Español

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

1-888-246-2857 or

www.cdc.gov/spanish/enfermedades/hepatitis/HepatitisB.htm

Virginia Department of Health: Spanish fact sheet

www.vdh.state.va.us/spanish/hepb.htm

Latino Organization for Liver Awareness (LOLA)

1-888-367-LOLA (5652) or 718-892-8697 or www.lola-national.org

Chinese/ 中文

Hepatitis B Foundation

www.hepb.org/08-0197.hepb
(traditional) or
www.hepb.org/13-0604.hepb
(simplified)

Immunization Action Coalition (If you have **chronic** hepatitis B virus)

www.immunize.org/catg.d/noneng.htm#Chinese

Korean/ 한국어

Hepatitis B Foundation

www.hepb.org/09-0210.hepb

For Information on Drug/Alcohol Abuse Treatment

LIFENET:

1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638)

Spanish/ Español: 1-877-AYUDESE (1-877-298-3373)

Asian languages: 1-877-990-8585

New York State Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services:

1-800-522-5353

If You Don't Have Health Insurance, Check for Free or Low-cost Insurance:

Family Health Plus:

1-877-9FHPLUS (1-877-934-7587)

www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/fhplus/index.htm

Healthy NY:

1-866-HealthyNY (1-866-432-5849)

www.HealthyNY.com

New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

Please call 311 for hours and directions to these facilities.

If you do not already have a doctor to take care of your hepatitis you can go to any HHC hospital; these are the ones with clinics that specialize in the care of patients with hepatitis.

Bellevue Hospital Center

462 First Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Elmhurst Hospital Center

79-01 Broadway
Elmhurst, New York 11373

Harlem Hospital Center

506 Lenox Avenue
New York, New York 10037

Kings County Hospital Center

470 Clarkson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11203

Metropolitan Hospital Center

1901 First Avenue
New York, New York 10029

Vaccination

- Vaccination against hepatitis A is recommended for people with hepatitis B.
- The vaccines are safe, effective, and can protect your liver from further damage.
- Vaccination against hepatitis B is recommended for household contacts, and sexual and needle-sharing partners of people with hepatitis B.

Get the vaccines from your regular health care provider, or you can visit one of the clinics listed below:

NYC DOHMH Confidential No Cost Clinics

Please call 311 for hours and directions to these facilities.

These clinics also provide:

- PAP tests
- Confidential and anonymous HIV counseling and testing
- Referrals as needed
- Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) diagnosis and treatment

Central Harlem

2238 Fifth Avenue (137th Street)
New York, NY 10037

East Harlem

158 East 115th Street
(off Lexington Avenue)
New York, NY 10029

Chelsea

303 Ninth Avenue (at 28th Street)
New York, NY 10001

Bushwick Clinic

335 Central Avenue
(between Linden St and Grove St)
Brooklyn, NY 11221

Fort Greene

295 Flatbush Ave. Extension, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Corona

34-33 Junction Blvd.
(at Roosevelt/Northern)
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

Riverside

160 West 100th Street
(between Columbus/Amsterdam)
New York, NY 10025

Morrisania

1309 Fulton Avenue
(E 169th Street off 3rd Ave.)
Bronx, NY 10456

Richmond

51 Stuyvesant Place (at Wall Street)
Staten Island, NY 10301

Jamaica

90-37 Parsons Blvd. 1st Flr.
(off Jamaica Ave.)
Jamaica, NY 11432

Rockaway

67-19 Rockaway Beach Blvd.
(Addabbo Health Center)
Queens, NY 11692



Call 311 to receive a copy of this booklet