



Hepatitis B Fast Facts

Everything you need to know in 2 minutes or less!



Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) that attacks liver cells and can lead to liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring) or cancer of the liver. The virus is transmitted through contact with blood and bodily fluids that contain blood.

Most people are able to fight off an hepatitis B infection and clear the virus from their blood. This may take up to six months. While the virus is present in their blood, infected people can pass the virus on to others.

Approximately 5-10% of adults, 30-50% of children, and 90% of babies will **not** get rid of the virus and will develop chronic infection. Chronically infected people can pass the virus on to others and are at increased risk for liver problems later in life.

The hepatitis B virus is 100 times more infectious than the AIDS virus. Yet, hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. For the 400 million people worldwide who are chronically infected with hepatitis B the vaccine is of no use. However, there are promising new treatments for those who live with chronic hepatitis B.

In the World:



- This year alone, 10 to 30 million people will become infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV).
- The World Health Organization estimates that 400 million people worldwide are already chronically infected with hepatitis B.
- HBV infection leads to over 1 million deaths each year.

In the US:



- This year alone, 100,000 new people will become infected with HBV.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 1.25 million Americans are already chronically infected with hepatitis B.
- Between 5000 and 6000 Americans die of hepatitis B-related liver complications each year.

How is Hepatitis B Transmitted?

Hepatitis B is most efficiently transmitted through blood and infected bodily fluids. This can occur through direct blood-to-blood contact, unprotected sex, illicit drug use, and from an infected woman to her newborn during the delivery process.

Hepatitis B can be spread by

- unprotected sex
- sharing IV drug needles
- living in a household with an infected person
- an infected mother to her newborn child at birth
- sharing earrings, razors, or toothbrushes with an infected person
- unsterilized needles, including tattoo or piercing needles
- human bites



Hepatitis B is not spread by

- kissing on the cheek or lips
- coughing or sneezing
- casual contact such as hugging or holding hands
- eating food prepared by an infected individual



People are most at risk for hepatitis B if they

- are born to mothers who are infected with HBV
- live in close household contact with a chronically infected individual
- adopt a child from a country where HBV is prevalent
- have unprotected sex or have more than one sexual partner in a six month period
- have ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- men who have sex with men
- share needles and syringes
- are health care provider or emergency responder with possible contact with bodily fluids
- are a patient on kidney dialysis
- live or work in an institutional setting, such as a prison or group home

Can hepatitis B be prevented?



YES! Ask your doctor about the safe and effective vaccine and protect yourself and your loved ones for a lifetime. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all infants, children and adolescents up to age 18 receive the HBV vaccine. The vaccine is also recommended for all adults who may be at high risk for infection.

The cost for the vaccine varies in the US, but most insurance plans cover infants and children to 18 years of age. Some people can receive the vaccine free of charge from their local public health clinic. High-risk adults may also be covered by their health insurance or can receive the vaccine through an STD or family planning clinic.

Remember, it only takes three shots to provide a lifetime of protection!



Additional hepatitis B resources

Visit our website at www.hepb.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hepatitis branch at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

American Liver Foundation at www.liverfoundation.org

Immunization Action Coalition at www.immunize.org