

Hepatitis B Facts



The Basics

What Is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver that can cause scarring of the liver, increase the risk of liver cancer and cause death.

Acute Hepatitis B refers to a short-term infection that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is infected with the virus. The infection can range in severity from a mild illness with few or no symptoms to a serious condition requiring hospitalization. Some people, especially adults, are able to clear (or get rid of) the virus without treatment. People who clear the virus become immune and cannot get infected with the Hepatitis B virus again.

Chronic Hepatitis B refers to a lifelong infection with the virus. Over time, chronic Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer and death.

What Are The Symptoms?

There may be no symptoms or you may have:

- Jaundice (yellow eyes or skin)
- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Muscle aches
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea/vomiting

Infection Facts

How Could I Get Infected With Hepatitis B?

You can be infected by:

- Blood transfusion/hemodialysis
- Sex
- Sharing needles/cocaine straws
- Tattoos/body piercings
- Handling contaminated blood
- Sharing toothbrushes, razors, etc.
- Mother to child during birth

What Are Some Ways I CANNOT Get Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is not spread in food or water. You also cannot get Hepatitis B by:

- Sneezing or coughing
- Hugging
- Touching or shaking hands
- Kissing
- Sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses

Testing Positive For Hepatitis B

You Need A Doctor's Care.

- Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease that should be followed by a doctor, even if you feel well.
- If you have tested positive for Hepatitis B, contact a doctor to treat you.

You May Be Putting Others At Risk.

- Hepatitis B can be given to others through contact with an infected person's body fluids by having sex and sharing toothbrushes, razors or needles.
- If you have tested positive for Hepatitis B, please contact people who may be at risk for any of these reasons.

You Can Help Protect Others.

If you have Hepatitis B, you can protect others from getting it by following these common sense rules:

- If you are sexually active, use condoms.
- Do not share needles, razors, toothbrushes, cocaine straws, etc.
- Help them get vaccinated against Hepatitis B.
- Teach them about Hepatitis B and how to prevent it.
- If you or your sexual partner are pregnant, contact Columbus Public Health for diagnosis/treatment.

You May Have Questions.

For more information or to talk about Hepatitis B, please call Columbus Public Health at (614) 645-1474.

More Information

Columbus Public Health

614-645-1474, option 2
www.publichealth.columbus.gov

The American Liver Foundation

800-465-4837 / www.liverfoundation.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

888-443-7232 / www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

Hepatitis Prevention Programs

651-647-9009

The Hepatitis Foundation International

800-891-0707 / www.hepfi.org