



## HEPATITIS B FACT SHEET

### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that can be a mild illness lasting a few weeks or a serious, life-long illness. Hepatitis B can either be “acute” or “chronic.” A small portion of acute Hepatitis B cases may sometimes be fatal.

### What is the difference between acute Hepatitis B and chronic Hepatitis B?

- *Acute Hepatitis B* virus infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the Hepatitis B virus. Acute infection can lead to chronic infection, but not always. Many people do not know they are infected or may not have symptoms. As a result, they never go to the doctor.
- *Chronic Hepatitis B* virus infection is a long-term illness that occurs when the Hepatitis B virus stays in the person’s body. Most people with chronic Hepatitis B may be symptom-free for as long as 20-30 years. About 15%-25% of people with chronic Hepatitis B develop cirrhosis or liver cancer.

### How is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids infected with the Hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. Even dried blood can present a risk to others. All blood spills, including dried blood, should be cleaned with bleach and water. People can become exposed during:

- Birth (spread from an infected mother to her baby during birth)
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, razors or toothbrushes
- Direct contact with the blood or open wounds of an infected person
- Contact with blood from sharp instruments

A person can spread Hepatitis B to others and not know it because they do not feel or look sick. If you think you have been exposed to the Hepatitis B virus, call your doctor or local health department. Hepatitis B is not spread through food or water.

### How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear 90 days after being exposed to the illness, but can appear any time between 6 weeks and 6 months after exposure.

## **What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?**

Symptoms of Hepatitis B, if they appear, can include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Tiredness
- Dark urine
- Jaundice (yellow color in eyes and skin)

Adults and children over the age of 5 are more likely to have symptoms. Seventy percent of adults will develop symptoms from the infection.

## **What is the treatment for Hepatitis B?**

There are no medicines to treat acute Hepatitis B. During the short-term infection, doctors may recommend rest, proper nutrition, and plenty of fluids. Some people may need to be in the hospital.

## **How can Hepatitis B be prevented?**

The best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting the Hepatitis B vaccine. It is given as a series of 3-4 shots over a 6 month time frame. The vaccine is recommended for:

- All infants, starting with the first dose at birth
- All children younger than 19 years of age
- Sexually active persons
- People whose sex partners have Hepatitis B
- Men who have sex with men
- People who share needles or other drug injecting equipment
- People who have close contact with someone infected with Hepatitis B
- Healthcare and public safety workers
- People living in group settings such as elder care facilities
- People with chronic liver disease or HIV infection
- Anyone who wants to be protected from Hepatitis B infection

The Hepatitis B vaccine is not recommended for people who are allergic to yeast or people who have had a reaction to the Hepatitis B vaccine in the past.

## **Where can I get more information on Hepatitis B?**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

## **Source of Information**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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