

# Hepatitis B Fast Facts

Everything you need to know in 2 minutes or less!

## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV), which attacks liver cells and can lead to cirrhosis (scarring), liver failure, or liver cancer.

Most healthy people who are infected as adults are able to fight off the infection and clear the virus from their blood. This may take up to 6 months, and they are infectious during this time. Unfortunately, infants and young children are at the greatest risk of developing chronic (lifelong) infection if they are exposed to HBV.

Approximately 5-10% of adults, 30-50% of children, and 90% of babies are not able to fight off the virus and will develop chronic infection. Chronically infected people can pass the virus on to others (even if they have no symptoms) and are at increased risk for developing liver disease and liver cancer later in life.

The good news is that hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. There are also effective treatments for those who live with chronic hepatitis B.

## Hepatitis B by the Numbers

### In the World:

- 1.5 million will become infected
- 296 million people worldwide are chronically infected with hepatitis B
- 820,000 people die each year - 1 person every 30 seconds - from hepatitis B complications such as liver cancer

### In the United States:

- At least 20,000 new people will become infected
- Up to 2.4 million Americans are chronically infected with hepatitis B
- Thousands of Americans die from hepatitis B and its complications, such as liver cancer

## Can Hepatitis B be Prevented?

YES! Ask your doctor about the safe and effective hepatitis B vaccine and protect yourself and your loved ones for a lifetime. The CDC recommends that all infants, children, adults up to age 59, and adults 60 and older who are at high-risk for infection receive the hepatitis B vaccine. Outside the U.S., the World Health Organization recommends that all infants, children, adolescents up to age 18, and high-risk adults receive the vaccine. Remember, it only takes a few shots for a lifetime of protection!

# How is Hepatitis B Transmitted?

Hepatitis B is transmitted through infected blood and bodily fluids. This can occur through direct blood-to-blood contact, unprotected sex, illegal drug use, and from an infected woman to her newborn during pregnancy or childbirth.

## Hepatitis B can be spread by:

- Direct contact with infected blood
- Unprotected sex
- Dirty or unsterile needles (IV drug use, tattoo/piercing needles)
- Living in a household with an infected person
- An infected mother to her newborn baby during pregnancy or childbirth
- Sharing razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, earrings, or body jewelry with an infected person
- Human bites from an infected person
- Unsterilized instruments used by roadside dentists, doctors, and barbers

## Hepatitis B is not spread by:

- Kissing on the cheek or lips
- Coughing or sneezing
- Casual contact such as hugging, holding hands or shaking hands
- Eating food prepared by or eating a meal with an infected individual



# Who is Most at Risk for Hepatitis B?

- Children born to mothers who are infected with HBV
- People who live in close household contact with a chronically infected individual
- Children adopted from a country where HBV is prevalent
- Individuals who have unprotected sex or have more than one sexual partner within a 6-month period
- People who have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- Men who have sex with men
- Individuals who share needles and syringes
- Health care providers and emergency responders
- People who are undergoing kidney dialysis
- Individuals who live or work in an institutional setting, such as a prison or group home

# Additional Hepatitis B Resources

- Hepatitis B Foundation: <http://www.hepb.org>
- CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/>
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>
- Immunization Action Coalition: <http://www.immunize.org>