

# Hepatitis B and Adoption

The Hepatitis B Foundation congratulates you on your decision to adopt and wishes your new family many happy, wonderful years together. The adoption of a child is an exciting time. Amid all the preparations, there are many factors to consider. One of these is hepatitis B.

This is a special concern for children coming from areas where hepatitis B is prevalent, such as Asia, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe. Although hepatitis B is less prevalent in the U.S., it is still a health concern for children in America.

Education is the key to a successful adoption, so please know that we are here to help answer your questions about hepatitis B and the vaccine.

*Most adopted children with hepatitis B can expect to enjoy a full and normal childhood – and a long and healthy life.*



## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is the world's most common serious liver infection. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV), which can attack and injure the liver, leading to liver disease, cirrhosis or liver cancer. This can occur through direct blood-to-blood contact, unprotected sex, unsterile needles or medical/dental equipment, and from a hepatitis B positive woman to her newborn during pregnancy or childbirth.

Most healthy adults who contract hepatitis B have mild symptoms and recover without complications. Most babies and young children who are infected are not able to fight off the virus and will develop a life-long infection.

## Testing your child

Since overseas HBV testing is either not done or can be inaccurate, it is important that your child is tested for hepatitis B upon arrival in the U.S. Ask your doctor to run a hepatitis B panel along with other recommended blood work. There are typically no symptoms, so testing is the only way to know for sure.

## Is it preventable?

YES! There is a safe and effective vaccine to protect against HBV infection, which is administered as three shots over six months. It is important that you vaccinate yourself and loved ones before your adoption is completed. You may wish to confirm you are protected by asking your doctor to run an anti-HBs titer blood test 1-2 months following the last shot of the vaccine series. If your new child arrives and tests negative for HBV, be sure to vaccinate him or her as well. Do not assume your child has been vaccinated.

## Information and Referral

Should you discover your child has hepatitis B, information and support is available. The Hepatitis B Foundation can put you in contact with other parents with children living with chronic hepatitis B.

For additional information, please visit the Hepatitis B Foundation website at [www.hepb.org](http://www.hepb.org) or contact us at [info@hepb.org](mailto:info@hepb.org) or 215-489-4900.



The Hepatitis B Foundation is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to finding a cure and improving the quality of life for those affected by hepatitis B worldwide.

**WWW.HEPB.ORG | 215-489-4900**