

# Hepatitis B

*Understanding Hepatitis B and Promoting Testing in African Immigrant Communities*

*A guide for community health workers, health educators, healthcare providers and other professionals*



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention



**KNOW**<sup>™</sup>  
**HEPATITIS B**

**HEPATITIS B**  
FOUNDATION



There are other forms of hepatitis, but this presentation will focus on hepatitis B.

## This presentation will cover:

- ▶ Hepatitis B basic information
  - ▶ What is hepatitis B?
  - ▶ How people can become infected
  - ▶ Testing
  - ▶ Treatment and next steps
- ▶ Tips for educating your community
  - ▶ Common misconceptions
  - ▶ How to dispel stigma
  - ▶ Helpful resources



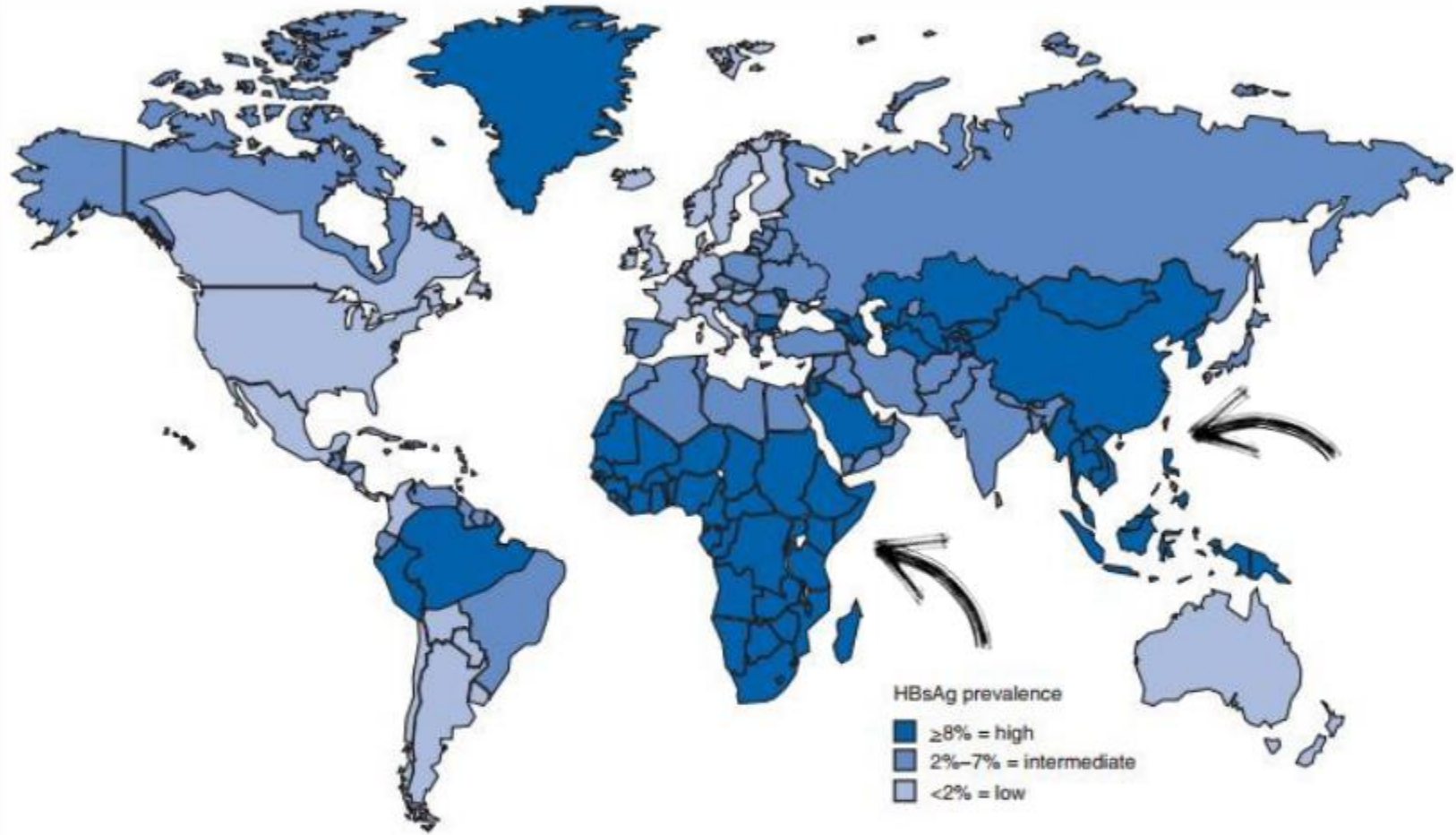
**Why is Hepatitis B  
Relevant to Me?**

# Because...

Hepatitis B is one of the world's most common infections.

Hepatitis B is more common among people who were born in Africa and other parts of the world.

In African communities in the U.S., between 5% and 18% of people have hepatitis B.





# What is Hepatitis B?



*Hepatitis B is a viral infection that can cause serious liver disease and even liver cancer.*



Keeping your liver healthy is important because it has many jobs in your body.

Digests food. 🍌

Regulates energy.



Builds muscle.



Breaks down toxins.

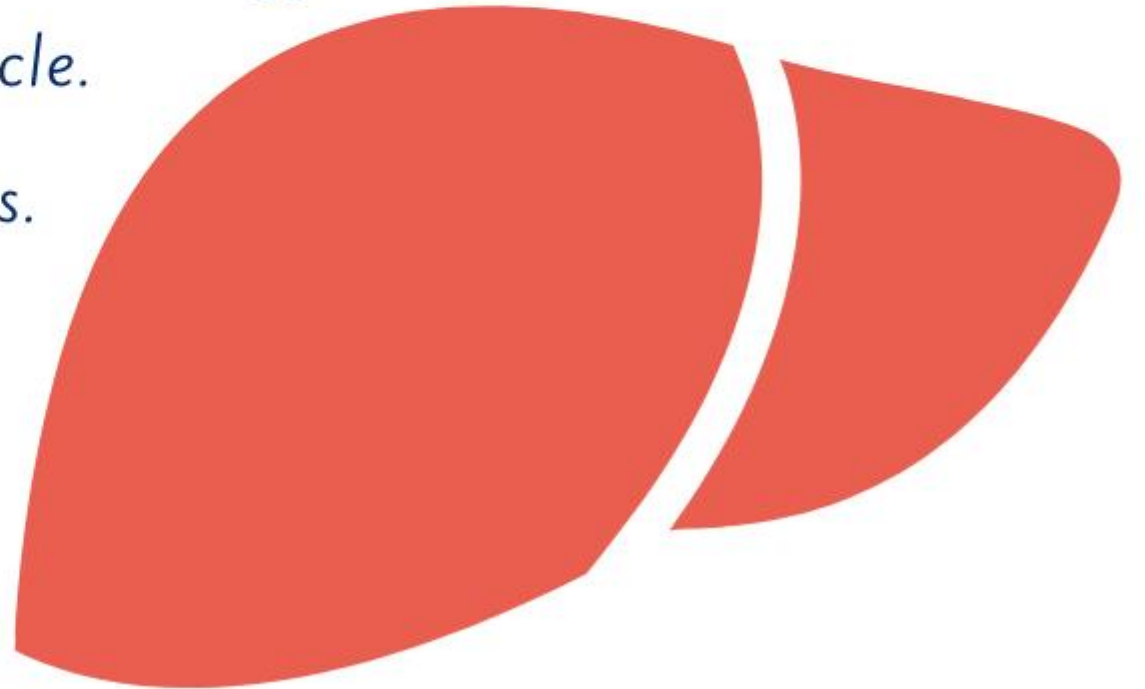
Fights infections.

Processes medications.

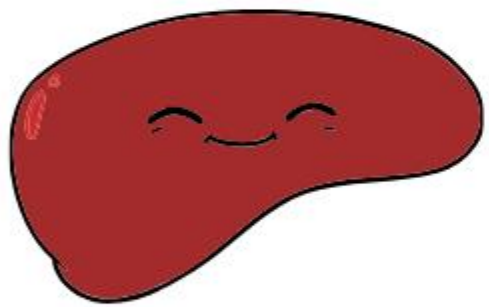


Stores vitamins.

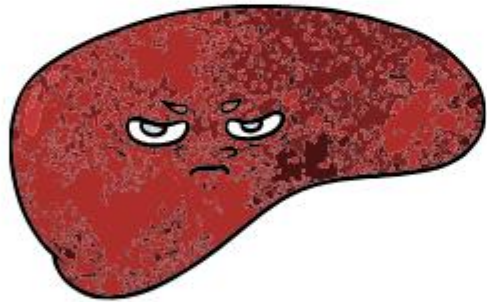
Helps the blood to clot.



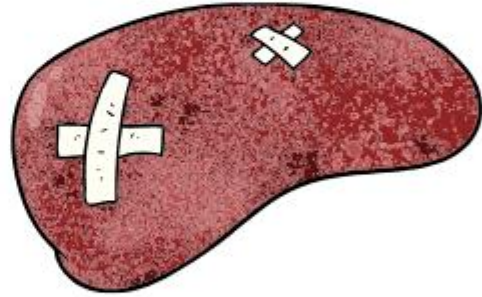
Hepatitis B can lead to liver damage and liver cancer over time.



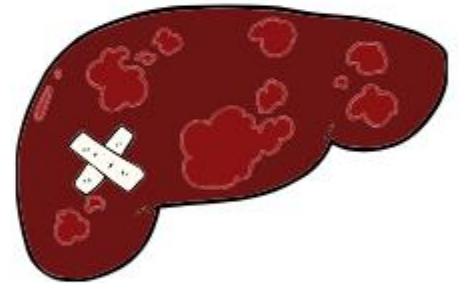
Healthy liver



Mild inflammation can lead to "Fibrosis"



A lot of inflammation can lead to a scarred liver "Cirrhosis"

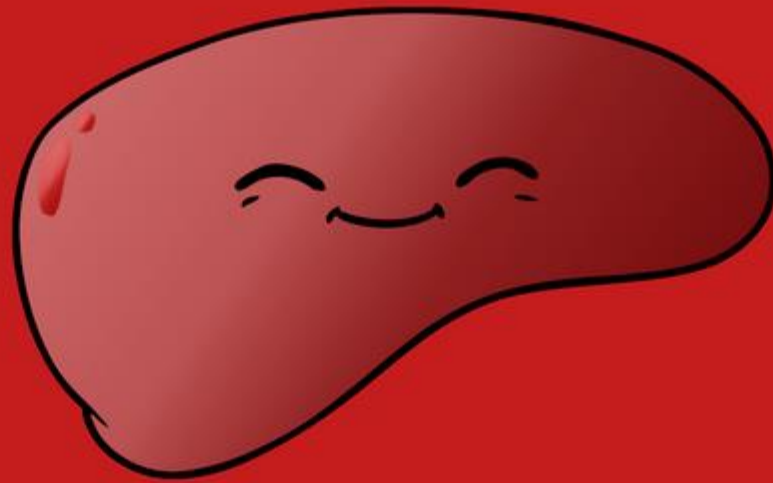


Long-term infection with hepatitis B can lead to liver cancer





People cannot live  
without their liver!



The good news:

When managed by a doctor, hepatitis B is a disease that people can live with for a long time.

By taking care of their health, people can live healthy and productive lives!



Health educators can help keep  
the community healthy by  
learning about hepatitis B and  
promoting awareness and testing.

# Hepatitis B is one of the world's most common infections.

## Worldwide

More than 250 million people are living with hepatitis B



## In the United States

Almost 1 million people are living with hepatitis B

A community study found that 30% of people living with hepatitis B in the U.S. were African-born

## Why is hepatitis B more common in Africa?



*Hepatitis B has existed in Africa for thousands of years, and continues to affect millions of people on the continent.*

*Because the hepatitis B vaccine is not available in all parts of Africa, many infants and young children are at risk of infection.*



Most people with hepatitis B do not know that they are infected!



# There are 2 kinds of hepatitis B infections.

*Acute*



*Short-term infection*

*Chronic*



*Lifelong infection*

The age when someone becomes infected determines what type of infection they will have.

## Acute

*An infection that lasts less than 6 months*



- *Less common*
- *Usually occurs by getting infected as an adult*
- *Usually clears from the body within 6 months*

## Chronic

*An infection that lasts for life*



- *More common*
- *Usually occurs by getting infected during childhood*
- *Usually lasts for life*





*Although hepatitis B can be prevented with a vaccine at birth, not all babies receive the vaccine.*

*Many pregnant women do not know they are infected, and unknowingly transmit the virus to their babies.*

*Without the vaccine, most of these will develop into chronic, lifelong infections.*

# Someone can also get hepatitis B through:

## Blood

*Direct blood to blood contact with an infected person*



*Mother to child during birth*



*Household contact  
Sharing hygiene equipment  
(razors, toothbrushes,  
earrings etc.)*



*Healthcare exposures*



*Tattoos, piercings, barbers,  
scarification, circumcision  
practices*



*Sharing needles*

## Sex

*Direct contact with sexual fluids of an infected person*



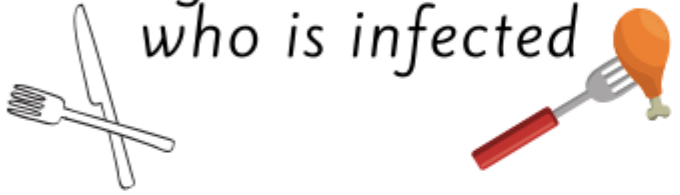
*Unprotected Sex*

*There is a risk during any  
type of sexual contact*

# Hepatitis B is NOT spread by:

Food

Or sharing meals with someone who is infected



Sneezing or coughing on someone



Holding hands



Water

Drinking from a cup of someone who is infected or sharing a toilet



Breastfeeding



Hugging



Kissing



Less than 10% of people infected with chronic hepatitis B have symptoms.

*If symptoms occur with chronic hepatitis B, they can be a sign of advanced liver disease:*



Yellow skin or eyes, abdominal pain, vomiting, feeling tired, joint pain, dark urine or clay colored stool



- ▶ Although hepatitis B is common in Africa, most people who are infected are unaware.
  - ▶ People can be afraid to get tested and may face cultural, religious and structural obstacles to accessing healthcare.
- ▶ Not knowing about an infection is a health risk.
  - ▶ Without regular healthcare and possible treatment, a person with hepatitis B faces an increased risk of dying early or unknowingly infecting others.

# The test for hepatitis B is a simple blood test.

*The blood test can be done at a doctor's office, clinic or at a community health fair.*



*It is quick and easy and the results will be available in a few days.*

## After someone is tested:

If the test results show that

Someone is *NOT* infected

- They should get vaccinated to prevent hepatitis B

Someone is infected

- They should see a doctor for additional testing
- Have family members and sexual partners tested



# People who test positive for hepatitis B can stay healthy by:

1

Seeing their doctor 1-2 times a year.

- Ideally a doctor experienced in managing hepatitis B
- They will perform additional tests and, if needed, recommend treatment



2

Leading a healthy lifestyle.

- Eating a nutritious diet
- Staying physically active
- Avoiding alcohol and cigarettes

*These contain toxins that can harm the liver*





# There is no cure for chronic hepatitis B.

*Claims that medicine or herbal remedies can cure the virus are false.*



There are treatments for hepatitis B.

**But, the good news is that...**

*There are treatments, called antivirals, that can effectively control the virus and prevent liver damage.*



# Why should people get tested for hepatitis B?



*Hepatitis B can be managed and treated!*

*Most people do not have symptoms.*



*Someone should not wait until they feel sick.*



*They should get tested now!*



*There is a safe and effective vaccine that can protect loved ones who don't have hepatitis B.*

*Getting tested now can allow someone to stay healthy for themselves and their loved ones!*





You have the power to save lives by:

- Educating about hepatitis B
- Promote testing in your community






Talking about hepatitis B in a culturally sensitive way can be challenging.



*Knowing the common misconceptions and how to overcome them can help dispel stigma and convey accurate information.*



## Misconception #1: Symptoms



*I don't have any  
symptoms.*

*Could I still have  
hepatitis B?*



**Yes.**

*Most people  
with hepatitis B  
do not have  
any symptoms!*

# Fact #1

**Most people with hepatitis B don't have any symptoms.**

## Remember:

*People may be used to treating illnesses only when they have symptoms. People may not have a sense of urgency to get tested.*

## Key Tips:

- *Let community members know that people with hepatitis B often have no symptoms, even though their liver could be damaged.*
- *Remind people that they have the power to improve their health now, to prevent serious liver problems in the future.*
- *The hepatitis B test is a simple blood test. It is the only way to know if someone is infected!*



## Misconception #2: Transmission

*I haven't done anything risky to get hepatitis B.*

*Could I still have it?*



**Yes.**

*Most people contract hepatitis B as babies or children.*



## Fact #2

**Most people living with hepatitis B were infected at birth or early childhood.**

### Remember:

*Some people associate hepatitis B with unhealthy or risky behaviors. People may not be aware of how most people become infected.*

### Key Tips:

- Reinforce the most common way hepatitis B is transmitted; which is through blood contact at birth or during early childhood.
- Reminding them that hepatitis B is one of the world's most common infections may be helpful in normalizing testing.



## Misconception #3: Medical Care



Are there  
treatments for  
hepatitis B?



**Yes.**

Treatments are  
available that  
can help people  
stay healthy.

## Fact #3

**Treatments are available that can help people stay healthy.**

### Remember:

*People may be worried that a hepatitis B diagnosis will change their whole life – but it doesn't have to!*

### Key Tips:

- *People with hepatitis B can still live long, healthy and productive lives.*
- *Hepatitis B usually progresses slowly. The biggest danger is not knowing someone is infected!*
- *Hepatitis B can be managed effectively over time by seeing a doctor and taking treatment if it is needed.*





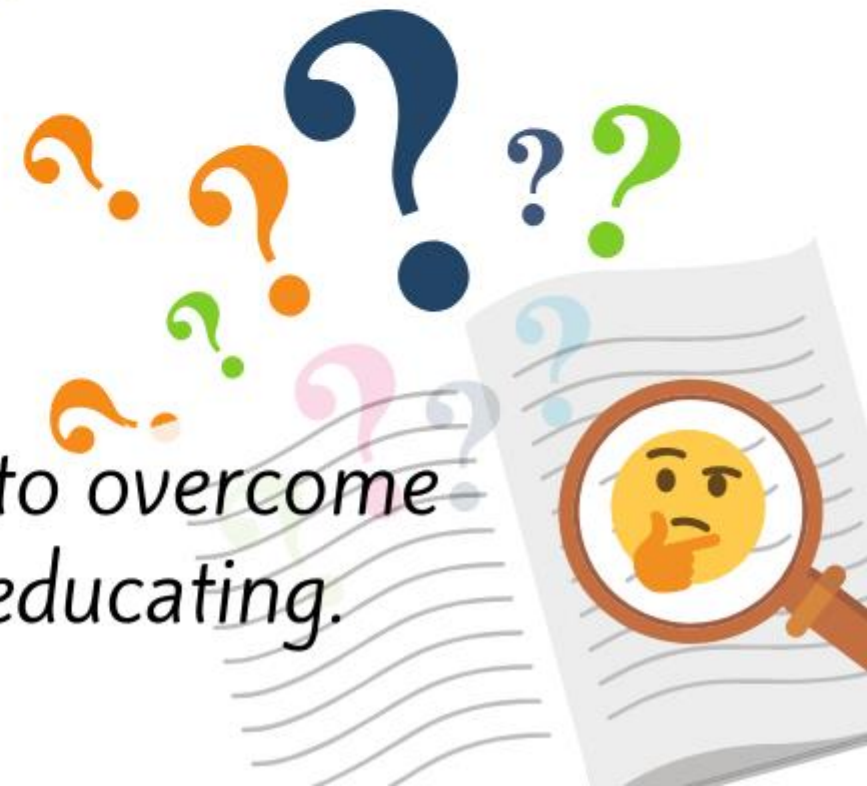
*Be Aware:*



*There can be stigma and fear associated with hepatitis B.*



*Let's learn more about to overcome these barriers when educating.*



# Dispelling Stigma: Misinformation

Stigma can come from misinformation.

Misinformation can create assumptions about how someone may have gotten the virus.

People may assume that people have contracted hepatitis B through:

- Immoral behavior
- Drug use
- Having many sex partners



# Dispelling Stigma: Misinformation

To overcome misinformation,  
emphasize the facts!

People most commonly get hepatitis B from:

- Their mothers during birth
- Contact with blood during early childhood

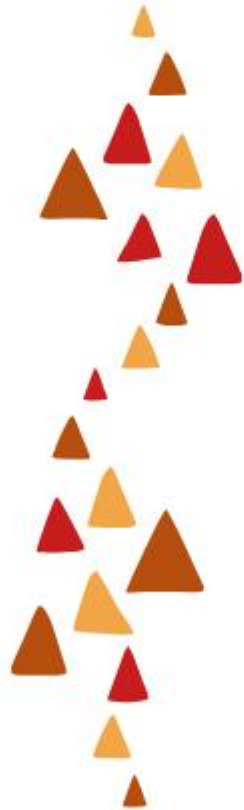
Anyone can get it regardless of  
their cultural or religious values



# Dispelling Stigma: Fear



Stigma can also come from fear.

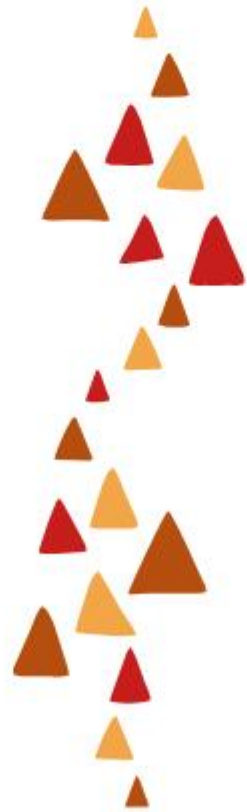


- Being seen getting tested
- Managing a hepatitis B infection
  - Cost
  - Seeing a doctor regularly
  - Family burden
- Social stigma
  - Isolation from friends and family
  - Community judgment

# Dispelling Stigma: Fear



*To overcome fear, normalize hepatitis B testing and emphasize available resources.*



- Resources are available to help people living with hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis B is a very common virus, and can be managed effectively by seeing a doctor and making simple lifestyle changes.
- The more correct information the community knows, the less stigma that will exist around hepatitis B!





You play an important role in your community,  
and you have the power to promote awareness and testing for hepatitis B!



## Key tips:

- ▶ *Never invalidate someone's concerns. Always encourage community members to become empowered and proactive about their health, so they can stay healthy for themselves and their families.*
- ▶ *If someone tests positive for hepatitis B, there are many resources available to help them manage their infection, even if they do not have insurance.*
- ▶ *A hepatitis B diagnosis isn't a death sentence, and by living a healthy lifestyle and monitoring it with the doctor, people can live healthy and productive lives!*

# You are not alone! There are resources available to help:



## How can I locate doctors for testing and care?

- ↘ The Hepatitis B Foundation's Liver Specialist Directory  
[www.hepb.org/physiciandirectory](http://www.hepb.org/physiciandirectory)
- ↘ Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Locator  
[www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov)

## Where can I find more information on hepatitis B?

- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - Basic information about hepatitis B, guidelines and downloadable PDFs
  - Printable fact sheets, PSA videos, infographics, quizzes and more in multiple languages
  - Free posters
- ↘ [www.cdc.gov/knowhepatitisB](http://www.cdc.gov/knowhepatitisB)
- ▶ The Hepatitis B Foundation
  - Phone and email helplines
  - Comprehensive information
  - Printable fact sheets
  - Inspiring videos
- ↘ [www.hepb.org](http://www.hepb.org)

# There are many ways that you can integrate hepatitis B education into your community.

Talk to community members about their health and hepatitis B risk.



Promote a local health fair that is testing for hepatitis B.



Host an education session, health fair or hepatitis B testing event.

Display educational fact sheets, brochures and posters in your office.



Share CDC's and the Hepatitis B Foundation's posts on social media.





The toolkit contains more details and support for integrating these ideas.



Thank you for helping  
spread the word about hepatitis B!





*After viewing this presentation, please  
complete a short self-assessment.*

**Click Here!**

*Your feedback can help us provide you with  
the most useful resources!*

*For questions or additional support, email: [info@hepb.org](mailto:info@hepb.org)*



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