

# Viral Hepatitis B

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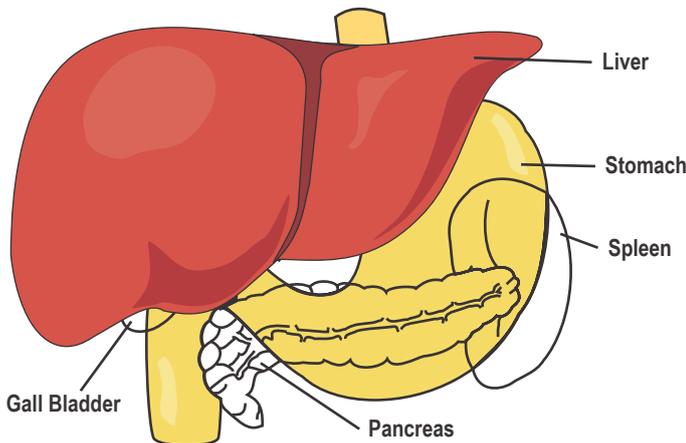
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### What is the liver?

The liver is the second largest organ of the body. It performs numerous tasks like storing vital energy and nutrients, manufacturing proteins and enzymes necessary for good health, protecting the body from disease, and also helps remove harmful toxins, like alcohol, from the body.

### What is viral hepatitis?

Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. Viral hepatitis is caused by infection of the liver with one of the five hepatitis viruses – A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis D can occur only in the presence of hepatitis B.



### What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B results from an infection with the hepatitis B virus. It is a contagious liver disease i.e. it can spread from person to person.

It can be mild in severity and may last for a few weeks. Or it might be a serious, lifelong illness. Thus hepatitis B can be either acute

or short lasting and chronic or lasting for a longer time/lifelong.

### What is acute hepatitis B infection?

It is a short term disease. Within 6 months of diagnosis it is called acute hepatitis B. It may or may not progress to chronic hepatitis B.

### What is chronic hepatitis B infection?

Chronic Hepatitis B virus infection is a long-term illness that occurs when the hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body beyond 6 months. The progression to chronic hepatitis B depends upon the age at exposure to hepatitis B. An infant who is infected is more likely to progress to chronic hepatitis as against older children or adults.

### How can you get hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B virus is transmitted through:

- Direct contact with infectious blood
- From infected mothers to infants
- Unsafe sexual intercourse
- Transfusions of infected blood and blood products
- Sharing razors or other personal items with an infected person
- Being pierced or tattooed with contaminated instruments
- Contaminated injections during medical procedures
- Needle-stick injuries
- Sharing contaminated needles

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## Can a person spread hepatitis B and not know it?

Yes, because most people infected with hepatitis B do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected, until they have symptoms of cirrhosis or liver cancer many years later.

## What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Symptoms when present can include:

- Yellow discoloration of skin and eyes
- Abdominal swelling or severe abdominal pain
- Prolonged itching of skin
- Very dark colored urine or pale stools, or passage of bloody or tar like stools
- Constant fatigue, tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Disturbed sleep
- Loss of sex drive

## How is hepatitis B diagnosed?

The only way to diagnose hepatitis B is by blood tests, which can determine if a person has been infected and cleared the virus, is currently infected, or has never been infected.

## Who should be tested for hepatitis B?

- Pregnant women
- Household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B
- People born in endemic areas
- Certain medical conditions
  - HIV infection
  - Chemotherapy
  - Hemodialysis
- IV drug users
- Men who have sex with men

## What is the treatment for Hepatitis B?

### Acute Hepatitis B

- No medication available
- Rest
- Adequate nutrition and fluids
- Some people may need hospitalization

### Chronic Hepatitis B

- Effective treatment is available for chronic hepatitis B. However, a "cure" is very rare.
  - Oral medications such as Lamivudine, Adefovir, Entecavir are available
  - Injections such as Interferon alfa and Pegylated interferon alfa-2a are used
  - Not everyone with hepatitis B needs to be treated. The decision to treat or not to treat and when to treat lies with the doctor.
- The reason to treat hepatitis B is the prevention of serious and life-threatening consequences of prolonged hepatitis B infection.
- The evidence of response is based on blood tests that measure HBV DNA and liver enzymes
- The treatment needs to be given for prolonged period / indefinitely to keep the disease in control
- Treatment for hepatitis B is well tolerated. Interferons have side effects that include

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fatigue, body aches, and mood changes, and depression.

Regular care of the liver

- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid taking any medications from any other doctor/ prescription/non prescription medications.
- Alternative medicines also should be avoided

## Can hepatitis B be prevented?

Yes, hepatitis B infection can be prevented by avoiding exposure to the virus:

- Do not share needles for injecting intravenous drugs
- Practice safe sex

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is vaccination. Safe and effective vaccines are available for hepatitis B. These vaccines are given to small children along with other immunizations. For adults who have not been vaccinated and in situations where there is exposure to hepatitis B virus, vaccination is recommended. There are usually 3 doses of the vaccine. These should be taken as per the advice of the doctor otherwise they do have a protective value.

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