

Hepatitis B- Factsheet

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is caused by a DNA Virus known as *Hepatitis B virus (HBV)*.

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, jaundice.

Persons with chronic HBV infection might be asymptomatic.

How is Hepatitis B spread?

HBV is transmitted through activities that involve percutaneous (i.e., puncture through the skin) or mucosal contact with infectious blood or body fluids (e.g., semen, saliva). HBV is not spread through food or water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, hand holding, coughing, or sneezing.

How long are people contagious?

People can spread the HBV virus as long as it is present in their blood.

Who gets Hepatitis B?

- Infants born to infected mothers.
- Sex partners of infected persons.
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship (e.g., >1 sex partner during the previous 6 months).
- Men who have sex with men.
- Injection drug users.
- Household contacts of persons with chronic HBV infection.
- Health care and public safety workers at risk for occupational exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids.
- Hemodialysis patients.
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons.
- Travelers to countries with intermediate or high prevalence of HBV infection.

What treatment is available for people with Hepatitis B?

For acute infection, no medication is available; treatment is supportive. There are several antiviral medications for persons with chronic infection.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

No.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting Hepatitis B?

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is vaccination. Other ways are:

- Do not inject drugs.
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes)
- Follow universal blood/body fluid precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps objects in health care setting.
- Avoid unprofessional tattooing, body piercing, or acupuncture.
- Practice safe sex using latex condoms correctly.