

# HEPATITIS B

**KNOW** HEPATITIS B™

## When Someone in the Family has Hepatitis B

### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver disease. It is caused by the Hepatitis B virus. For some people who get Hepatitis B, the virus stays in the body, causing a lifelong illness. Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems over time. These problems can include liver failure and liver cancer.



### What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Most people who have Hepatitis B do not know they have it. The disease does not always cause symptoms. Hepatitis B can stay hidden in the body. Many people can live with Hepatitis B for 20 years without feeling sick. Still, liver damage from the disease can take place during this time.

### How is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is spread when someone comes in contact with blood from a person who has the disease. Most people born in China and other Asian countries who have Hepatitis B were infected as infants or young children. Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth or from a family member to young children. People living with someone who has Hepatitis B are more likely to get the disease.

Hepatitis B is not a genetic disease. People also do not get Hepatitis B from sharing meals, bowls or utensils with someone who has the disease. Hepatitis B is not spread through breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.

### What should be done when a family member has Hepatitis B?

Doctors will want to test all family members of people with Hepatitis B. This includes adults and children living in the same house. The test involves a simple blood test that takes only a small amount of blood from a person's arm.

Testing family members is important. Family members who have Hepatitis B should get medical treatment. Other family members who do not have the disease should get the Hepatitis B vaccine. This protects them from getting the disease.

Hepatitis B test results will be kept confidential. People with Hepatitis B cannot be forced to leave the United States. They also cannot be fired from a job, or forced to leave school.

### Why is the Hepatitis B vaccine important?

The vaccine protects people who have never had Hepatitis B from getting it. All babies born in the United States and many other countries get the vaccine as infants. Any other family members of people with Hepatitis B should also get the vaccine. The vaccine is safe. It also prevents people from getting Hepatitis B. This helps prevent liver disease and liver cancer that comes from getting Hepatitis B.

### What is the Hepatitis B vaccine series?

For adults, the vaccine is three shots given over six months. People should get all three shots to keep them from getting Hepatitis B.



U.S. Department of  
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