

HEPATITIS B



Living with 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 cancer and liver failure.

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 Asia 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.

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.



If you have Hepatitis B, see a doctor regularly to take care of your health.

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 many years without feeling sick. Still, liver damage from the disease can take place during this time.

How serious is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B can become very serious. For some people, this disease leads to liver damage, like liver failure or cancer.

How is Hepatitis B treated?

It is important to be checked regularly by a doctor experienced in treating Hepatitis B. Many people with Hepatitis B see their doctor one to two times a year for an exam, blood tests, and liver tests. The doctor will use these tests to help decide what medical care is needed. Medications, called antivirals, can be used to treat many people with Hepatitis B. However, these medications may not help everyone. Some people live with Hepatitis B for many years before needing to take medications. Talk to your doctor about the best treatment for you and if medication would help. Your doctor will look at the condition of your liver and other health problems you might have.

How do I take care of my liver?

- Check with your doctor before taking any prescription, over-the-counter medications, supplements or vitamins. Some drugs, such as certain pain medications, can potentially damage the liver.
- Avoid alcohol since it can increase the speed of liver damage.
- Ask your doctor if you should get the Hepatitis A vaccine.

How do I protect my family members from getting Hepatitis B?

People who find out they have Hepatitis B can also keep other family members healthy. Doctors will want to test all family members of people with Hepatitis B. The test involves a simple blood test that takes only a small amount of blood from a person's arm.

Why should my family get tested for Hepatitis B?

Family members who have Hepatitis B should see a doctor. Other family members who do not have the disease should get the Hepatitis B vaccine. The vaccine is safe and protects people who have never had Hepatitis B from getting infected. This helps prevent liver disease and liver cancer that can come from getting Hepatitis B.



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