

Hepatitis B - What You Need to Know

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus.

There are two types of hepatitis B infections:

- **Acute (short-term) hepatitis B**

Acute hepatitis B infection occurs within 6 months of exposure to the virus. Some people have no symptoms or may only have mild illness. Others can become more severely ill and require hospitalization.

- **Chronic (long-term) hepatitis B**

Chronic hepatitis B can lead to lifelong infection. If untreated, chronic hepatitis B can become serious, leading to **permanent damage and scarring of the liver (cirrhosis), liver cancer, or death.**

How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B spreads when infected bodily fluids like blood or semen enter the body. The hepatitis B virus can live on objects and in the environment for at least 7 days. Some common ways hepatitis B transmission occurs include:

- Birth; infected pregnant people can spread it to their newborns during the birthing process
- Having sex with an infected person
- Sharing contaminated equipment like needles and syringes or glucose monitors
- Sharing personal items like razors and toothbrushes (less common)

Hepatitis B is not spread through saliva or sharing of eating utensils or kissing. It is also not spread through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.

Who is at risk for hepatitis B?

Anyone can get hepatitis B. There are some groups, however, that have a higher risk. These include:

- Infants born to people with hepatitis B; nearly all newborns and 1 in 3 children infected with hepatitis B before age 6 develop chronic infection
- People born in countries where hepatitis B is common
- People with certain medical conditions including those with hepatitis C and HIV, those on dialysis, and those with liver damage or inflammation
- People who have been incarcerated
- People who use needles to inject drugs
- Healthcare workers

We can prevent hepatitis B with vaccines!



Flip over to read about hepatitis B symptoms and vaccine recommendations.



What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Many people with hepatitis B infection do not experience symptoms and may not know they are sick. With an acute infection, symptoms will usually appear within a few months of exposure. Symptoms of chronic hepatitis B may take years to develop. Symptoms may include:

- Dark-colored urine
- Light or clay-colored stool (poop)
- Tiredness
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, stomach pain, or vomiting
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice)

What are hepatitis B vaccine recommendations?

All children should receive 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine starting at birth, and the series should be completed by 18 months of age. Older children and adolescents who have not been vaccinated should be. Adults ages 19-59 should get vaccinated if they have not or are unsure of vaccine series completion. Adults age 60 and older should also get vaccinated if they have risk factors for the disease. Other adults who want to be protected may also get vaccinated.

Hepatitis B Fast Facts:

- Hepatitis B is a leading cause of liver cancer.
- 2 out of 3 people with hepatitis B don't know they are infected.
- Anyone can get hepatitis B.

**Have questions about hepatitis B vaccines?
Talk with your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or
community health center.**

**Find free and low-cost vaccine providers near you:
<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/find-free-low-cost-vaccine-provider>**

#KeepCOHealthy

Sources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-b/about/index.html>
- <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/perinatal-hepb>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-b/signs-symptoms/index.html>

www.ImmunizeColorado.org | www.ImmunizeforGood.com

