



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

HEPATITIS B

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a disease caused by a virus that infects the liver. Most people will recover completely, but 5-10% will become long-term (chronic) carriers of the virus.

How is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B may be spread through the following ways:

- Contact with infected blood or bodily fluids.
- From an infected mother to her newborn infant during childbirth.
- Tattooing
- Blood transfusions
- Unprotected sex (sex without condoms)
- Sharing needles

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Yellow eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach ache
- Extreme tiredness
- Some people have no symptoms and are not aware that they are carrying the virus

How is Hepatitis B diagnosed?

Hepatitis B is diagnosed with a laboratory test. Special tests can indicate whether the infection is acute (short term) or chronic (long term).

What is the treatment for Hepatitis B?

There is no specific treatment for acute Hepatitis B. Certain drugs have been licensed for treatment of Hepatitis B but not everyone can take these drugs.

How can Hepatitis B be prevented?

Hepatitis B can be prevented by:

- Careful hand washing
- Disinfecting or throwing away infected objects.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is available and is a routine part of the childhood vaccination schedule; all household contacts of someone who has chronic Hepatitis B should be vaccinated.
- Babies born to mothers with Hepatitis B should receive Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) and Hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours of delivery.
- Avoid unprotected sex with anyone with acute or chronic Hepatitis B.

For more information on Hepatitis B:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org
Medline Plus, National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000279.htm>