

# Hepatitis B

## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. The virus is in the blood, semen and vaginal fluids of a person with hepatitis B.

## How Do You Get Hepatitis B?

The virus can be spread during sex, by sharing dirty needles to inject drugs, or by getting blood or other infected body fluids in a mucous membrane (mouth or eyes) or on broken skin. It may be sexually transmitted through genital or anal contact with an infected person. The virus also can be passed from mother to baby, usually at the time of birth. The virus is not spread by casual contact. It takes 2-6 months from the time of exposure to onset of symptoms.

## What are the Symptoms?

The virus is in the body for several weeks before symptoms start until several months after. Up to 50% of people who have hepatitis B have no symptoms. Of adults who get hepatitis B, 5-10 % will go on to carry the virus for the rest of their lives. Symptoms may include:

- Tiredness.
- Loss of appetite.
- Fever.
- Vomiting.
- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).
- Urine dark in colour, stool light in colour

A blood test is needed for the diagnosis of hepatitis B.

## What is the Treatment?

There is no special treatment for hepatitis B. People with hepatitis B need rest and a proper diet. Some people need to be hospitalized, and some will need to take a medication prescribed by their doctor. Alcohol should be avoided. Talk to your doctor before taking any over the counter medication.

## How Can You Prevent Hepatitis B?

- Practice safer sex.
- Do not share needles, razors, toothbrushes, sexual toys, etc.
- Clean up spills of body fluids or blood of an infected person with a 1:10 solution of household bleach.
- If you are at high risk of contracting hepatitis B, you should receive hepatitis B vaccination.
- Use only professional tattoo artists and body piercing artists working in legitimate, reputable salons

People with the hepatitis B virus should tell their doctors, dentists, dental hygienists and all of their sexual partners that they are infected. **All sexual partners of those who carry hepatitis B should be vaccinated. All persons who have been exposed to hepatitis B should contact their doctor.**