

# About Hepatitis B

(Hep B or HBV)



SEDGWICK COUNTY  
Health Department

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## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). It is the world's leading cause of liver cancer.

## What are acute and chronic hepatitis B?

- Acute hepatitis B is the “new” infection.
- Chronic hepatitis B is the “long-term” infection that doesn’t go away without treatment.

## How common is it?

Hepatitis B is still common in many parts of the world, especially in Asia and Africa.

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that in 2020 there were about **880,000** people living with chronic hepatitis B and about **14,000** new (acute) infections.

## What are the symptoms ?

Many people infected with HBV do not know they are infected because they do not look or feel sick.

About 30-50% of newly infected people over 5 years old experience symptoms, while children under 5 years old typically experience no symptoms.

When symptoms occur people can experience:

- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Dark urine
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain

## How long can an infected person spread it?

After exposure, symptoms usually appear 60–150 days (average of 90 days).

A person can spread hepatitis B as long as the hepatitis B virus is in their body.

## How do you get it?

HBV is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids from a person infected with the virus enters the body of someone who is not infected.

The hepatitis B virus can survive on surfaces for up to seven days. People can become infected through:

- Birth (if a pregnant woman has hepatitis B, her baby can become infected)
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

## How is it treated?

You need a blood test to know if you have hepatitis B.

- People with **acute hepatitis B** usually get supportive care based on their symptoms.
- People with **chronic hepatitis B** may take antiviral medicines to help control the virus.
- Regular medical care is important to help prevent liver damage.

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can get Hepatitis B, but certain groups are at higher risk, including:

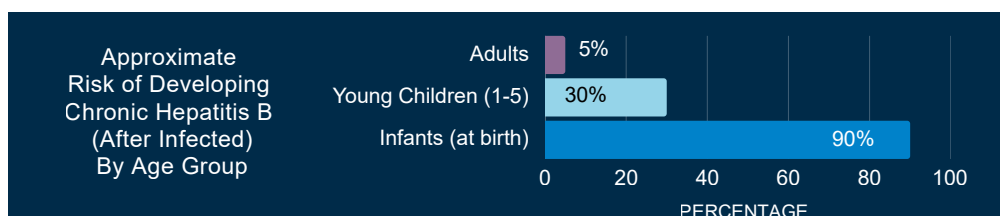
- Infants born to mothers with Hepatitis B
- People who have unprotected sex with multiple partners
- Individuals who share needles or other injection equipment
- People exposed to blood or body fluids
- People living in communities with high Hepatitis B prevalence
- People with weakened immune system

## How do you prevent it?

**The best way to prevent hepatitis B is to get vaccinated.**

Other ways to prevent infection:

- Pregnant women should get a hepatitis B blood test.
- Infants born to HBV-infected mothers should get HBIG (hepatitis B **immune globulin**) **and a vaccine** within 12 hours of birth.
- Use latex condoms if you have more than one partner
- Do not use intravenous (IV) drugs. Never share drugs, needles, or syringes.
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (e.g., razors and toothbrushes).
- If you are a healthcare or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier and safety precautions
- Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing.
- If you are HBV positive, do not donate blood, plasma, organs, or tissue.



Adapted from CDC and Hepatitis B Foundation