

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a serious infection that attacks the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). This virus, one of several liver targeting viruses, causes the liver to become inflamed and irritated, thus affecting your liver's ability to function properly. Most individuals infected with the virus will clear the infection without medication and recover fully within 6 months. About 5% (1 out of 20) are not able to clear the virus and have chronic (lifelong) infection that can lead to liver failure, cirrhosis, or liver cancer. It is important that people are aware of the virus and know how to prevent infection. Currently, no cure for HBV exists, but a vaccine is available.

Who should consider being tested?

- Anyone who has had sex with someone with HBV
- IV drug users
- Anyone with unexplained abnormal liver enzymes on lab work
- Anyone with HIV
- Immigrants from areas where HBV is common, including Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, and Eastern Europe
- US-born children of these high risk immigrants who were not vaccinated as infants
- Prisoners
- Men who have sex with men
- All pregnant women
- People who take medications that suppress their immune system



Mission Statement - The Community Liver Alliance is dedicated to supporting the community through liver disease awareness, prevention, education and research.

For more information please visit our website
www.communityliveralliance.org

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Facts & Information
Preventive Measures
Treatment Options



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COMMUNITY LIVER ALLIANCE™

GLOBAL AWARENESS. LOCAL IMPACT.

What is your liver and what does it do??

The liver is a large reddish-brown solid organ that is approximately 3 to 4 pounds. Located in the upper part of the abdomen, it is tucked away under the right side of the rib cage. It is one of the largest organs in the body, second only to the skin. It is shaped like a pyramid and is divided into the right and left lobes.

The liver is a unique organ that performs many complex functions in your body every day. It acts as a filter to clean and clear your body of waste, thus helping your body fight infection. The liver is like a big chemical laboratory. It manages the nutrients that have been absorbed by the gut from food, removes toxins from the blood, makes big proteins like albumin and clotting factors (these help our blood clot), and secretes bile which helps digest our food.

How does one get Hepatitis B?

The HBV is spread through direct contact with bodily fluids. Common ways HBV is transmitted is through sexual contact, sharing of needles, accidental needle stick, and mother to child. If you know you have been exposed to HBV, you need to contact your doctor or seek medical care immediately.

How is it Diagnosed?

HBV is diagnosed with a simple blood test. If your doctor suspects you have chronic infection, he or she may also want to get a liver biopsy to see if the liver is damaged.

Signs and Symptoms

On average, symptoms usually appear 12 weeks after becoming infected with HBV, but can range anywhere between 4 weeks to 6 months. People typically feel as if they have the flu (ranging from mild to severe) with:

- abdominal pain
- nausea and vomiting
- fever
- muscle aches and joint pain
- fatigue
- yellowing of skin and eyes

Some people never develop symptoms of hepatitis B, especially true in children, and may be unaware that that they ever came in contact with the virus.

Treatment

Since 95% of individuals clear the infection on their own, treatment is not necessary for most people. Your doctor may help reduce the symptoms you experience during the time your body is fighting the infection. He or she may also recommend follow up blood work to ensure your body is clearing the virus. During this time get plenty of rest, drink enough fluids, eat a healthy diet, and avoid alcohol. Talk to your doctor before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications during this time.

Risk factors?

- Sharing needles during IV drug use
- Tattoo or piercing performed with a used/contaminated needle
- Healthcare and public safety workers exposed to blood
- Unprotected sexual contact with an infected person
- Having multiple sexual partners
- Men who have sex with men
- Babies born to HBV-infected mother
- Prisoners
- Travel to regions with high infection rates
- Dialysis patients