



## Hepatitis B - the basics

### What is hepatitis B? (hep-a-tite-is)

Hepatitis B is a blood borne virus.

It is very common in our community.

There are two types of hepatitis B:

#### **Acute hepatitis B:**

- Acute hepatitis B can last up to six months. Most adults who get hepatitis B clear the virus after this.
- People who have cleared the virus are no longer infectious – they will no longer pass hepatitis B on to other people.

#### **Chronic hepatitis B:**

- People who do not clear the hepatitis B virus have hepatitis B for life. This is called chronic hepatitis B.
- Unlike adults, babies and children who get hepatitis B generally cannot clear the virus. They are likely to develop chronic hepatitis B.
- Most adults who have chronic hepatitis B got it at birth or in childhood.
- Chronic hepatitis B slowly damages the liver, and can cause liver failure or cancer.

### **The hepatitis B vaccine**

There is a vaccine (medicine injection) that protects babies, children and adults from getting hepatitis B.

The vaccine has been given to babies since 1988.

Adults who missed out getting vaccinated as a baby can get vaccinated. Ask at the clinic.



## How do you get hepatitis B?

### **Mother-to-baby:**

- If a pregnant woman has hepatitis B it is very likely that she will pass on hepatitis B to her baby unless the baby is given hepatitis B treatment and vaccination soon after birth.
- It is very important for pregnant women to get tested for hepatitis B so that the hospital knows the new-born baby should get treated for hepatitis B.

### **Sex:**

- You can get hepatitis B from having sex with someone who has it and you have not been vaccinated.
- Condoms protect against getting hepatitis B from sex.

### **Sharing drug injecting or tattoo equipment**

- You can get hepatitis B from sharing drug injecting equipment or tattoo equipment with someone who has hepatitis B and you have not been vaccinated.
- Do not share injecting or tattooing equipment.

### **Other ways you can get hepatitis B**

- Babies, children and adults can get hepatitis B if blood from a person who has hepatitis B gets directly into an open cut or sore. Cover cuts and sores with band-aids. Clean up blood spills.
- You can get hepatitis B from sharing things like toothbrushes, razors, or sex toys with someone who has hepatitis B. Don't share these things.

## **Can you get hepatitis B from food, water, mosquitoes, toilet seats? Or by kissing and hugging?**

No.



### **Symptoms – how would I know if I got hepatitis B?**

You might get pain in the tummy and joints, feel tired and sick, vomit, and lose your appetite.

Your skin and eyes might go yellow, your pee may go dark and your poo might be light in colour.

Many people don't notice any symptoms or signs.

The only way to know whether you have hepatitis B is to get tested.

### **Testing for hepatitis B**

Testing for hepatitis B can be done at the clinic by taking a blood sample. You can get tested for hepatitis B as part of your men's or women's health check – just ask.

If you don't have hepatitis B the test will show whether you've been vaccinated.

If you're pregnant, it's very important that you get tested for hepatitis B. Your partner and family should get tested too.

### **Treatment for hepatitis B**

There is no cure for hepatitis B. People who have it need to stay healthy and have regular medical checks. There is medicine that can slow down the virus in some people.

*Let's look after our health and get tested for hepatitis B. Together we can stop the spread of hepatitis B in our community.*