



Hepatitis B

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

Hepatitis B is sometimes called hep B.

Hepatitis B is a blood borne virus that can damage your liver.

Hepatitis B is very common in our community. We need to get informed about hepatitis B so we can stop people in our community from getting it.

How do you get hepatitis B?

You can get hepatitis B from someone who has hepatitis B if:

- Their blood gets into your blood stream
- Their saliva, semen (cum) or vaginal fluid gets into your system through your mouth or genitals.

This means you can get hepatitis B from sharing drug injecting equipment or tattoo equipment with someone who has hepatitis B.

You can also get hepatitis B from:

- having sex without a condom with someone who has hepatitis B
- sharing personal items like toothbrushes, razors, or sex toys
- blood from a person who has hepatitis B getting directly into an open cut or sore.

Babies can be born with hepatitis B if their mother has it.

Safe injecting

Do not share injecting equipment with someone else. Hepatitis B can be passed on in infected blood.

A needle or syringe might look clean but there could be a tiny amount of blood you can't see.



You can get clean needles and syringes in chemists, health clinics, and community centres.

Safe tattooing and piercing

Do not share tattooing or piercing equipment with someone else. Hepatitis B can be passed on in small amounts of blood you can't see.

It's best to get tattoos done in a tattoo shop because you can make sure they use clean equipment.

Safe sex

Condoms can protect against passing on hepatitis B during sex, and also protect against other STIs. It's especially important to always use condoms with new sex partners.

Taking care in daily life

- Always cover cuts and sores with band-aids, especially during sport or sex
- If you get blood on your hands, wash them well
- Clean up any blood spills with bleach
- Throw out used tampons and pads in a tied up plastic bag.

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?

Many people who have hepatitis B have no symptoms or signs. This means you can have hepatitis B and not know it.

Some people get joint pain, feel very tired and sick, and lose their appetite. If you get hepatitis B, your skin and the whites of your eyes can turn yellow. Your pee might be dark, like tea. You might get light coloured poo and feel sick. These symptoms can go away after a few weeks.



Most adults who get hepatitis B recover or 'clear' the infection without treatment. These people are then no longer infectious.

Some people who get hepatitis B do not clear the virus, and remain infectious for many years. This is called chronic hepatitis B.

People who were born with hepatitis B or got it as a child are more likely to develop chronic hepatitis B.

People with chronic hepatitis B may look and feel well. Others have symptoms such as fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, tummy pain and joint pains. Chronic hepatitis B infection slowly damages the liver, and can cause liver failure or cancer of the liver.

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

Is there a medicine or vaccine to stop getting hep B?

There is a vaccine to protect against getting hepatitis B. You may have been vaccinated for hepatitis B as a baby. Check whether you were vaccinated as a baby by getting a blood test at the clinic.

Testing for hepatitis B

Testing for hepatitis B can be done at the clinic.

They will take a blood sample. You can get tested for hepatitis B as part of your men's or women's health check – just ask.

The blood test can show if you have a current infection or if you had hepatitis B in the past but you are no longer infectious. It can also show whether you are immune because you were vaccinated as a baby.

It's very important for pregnant women to test for hepatitis B.



Don't be shame

Testing for hepatitis B means you're looking after your health. If more people in our community test for hepatitis B, everyone is better off.

Test results are confidential. Your partner will not be told about your result without your permission. No one else in your family or community will be told about your result without your permission.

Your confidential test results are sent to health departments so we know whether STI and BBV rates are going up or down in a community. The test results are strictly guarded in confidential computers and locked rooms and only used to understand level of infections in a region. Health departments only let a small number of doctors or nurses use the confidential computers with STI or BBV records to keep the information safe.

Treatment for hepatitis B

There is no cure for hepatitis B.

People who have chronic hepatitis B need to look after their general health and get regular checks of their liver health. These are called liver function tests.

Treatments for people with chronic hepatitis B are improving and there is medicine that can slow down the virus in some people.

Letting partners know they need to test

If you are diagnosed with hepatitis B, you will need to let your sexual partners know they should get tested. If you have shared injecting or tattoo equipment you need to let the people you shared with know they should get tested. This is to make sure they don't have hepatitis B too. This is called "contact tracing".

Contact tracing is not about blame. It's just to make sure that as many people as possible who may have hepatitis B get tested and treated.



The clinic can help you with contact tracing – but only with your permission. This is confidential – the clinic will let people you have had sex with know that it's time to have a test. The clinic will not mention your name to the people they contact.

If you prefer to do this yourself, have a look at the *Better to know* website for advice about different ways you can let people you've had sex with know that they need to have an STI test – including on how to do this anonymously - without giving your name.

Condoms can stop STIs and BBVs from spreading: Here's how to use a condom:

- ⦿ Check expiry date, check the package is not damaged and open with care
- ⦿ Pinch the tip so air doesn't get trapped
- ⦿ Roll on when the penis is hard
- ⦿ Use water-based lubricant (lube). Oil based lubricant can damage the condom
- ⦿ When withdrawing, hold the base of the condom so semen (cum) doesn't spill out
- ⦿ Tie a knot in the used condom and put it in the bin. Not down the toilet as it will block the pipes.

Let's look after our health and get tested for BBVs and STIs. If we all test and get treated, we can stop the spread of BBVs and STIs in our community.