

Hepatitis B

What is it?

- Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver that is caused by a virus.
- The Hepatitis B virus can affect people in different ways. Most people who are infected with Hepatitis B do not get sick and have no symptoms. Some people get a mild illness; others can become very sick.
- If you do get symptoms, you may:
 - feel like you have the flu
 - have jaundice – yellowing of the skin and eyes
 - have darker urine
 - have lighter stool
 - have stomach pain
- Most people who get Hepatitis B recover completely. However, after the infection is finished some people are not able to rid their body of the virus. They continue to carry the virus in their body fluids for their entire life and may infect others. People who are “carriers” may develop liver problems later in life.

How is it spread?

Hepatitis B is spread from contact with the body fluids of an infected person. The virus is easy to catch – even a tiny amount of the virus can infect a person. Hepatitis B can be spread by:

- being born to a mother with Hepatitis C.
- sharing needles, straws, pipes, spoons and other drug-related equipment.
- getting a tattoo, body piercing or acupuncture when unsterilized equipment or poor technique is used.
- getting pierced by a needle or sharp object that has infected blood on it.
- having unprotected sex with an infected partner (having many sex partners increases the risk of contact with Hepatitis B)
- sharing personal household items such as toothbrushes, dental floss, razors, nail files or other items which could have tiny amounts of infected blood on them

Vaccine

- There is a vaccine for Hepatitis B. There are a few different types. Ask your doctor for the one recommended for you.
- There is also a combined vaccine of Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B that is available

Is there treatment for it?

- Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

What can be done to protect the spread of it?

- Get the Hepatitis B vaccine.
- Avoid contact with other people's body fluids.
- Practice safer sex. Use a condom. Safer sex may not completely protect a person from Hepatitis B.
- Do not share needles, syringes or other needle equipment.
- Have only a professional do your tattoo, or body and ear piercing. Never share any equipment used for tattoos and piercings.
- Do not share personal care items such as razors, dental floss or toothbrushes.

**Talk with your family doctor or nurse
if you share needles or have many sex partners.**

For more information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/hepatitis-b.html>

Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent further spread of the bacteria.

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**



This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.

