

Hepatitis B Fact Sheet

1. What is hepatitis disease? – Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital glandular organ presents in the upper right part of the abdomen, it filters and detoxifies the blood. When the liver is inflamed this function can be affected. Hepatitis is most often caused by a virus. In the United States, the most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications, and certain medical conditions can also cause hepatitis.

2. What is hepatitis B? - Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The virus, which is called hepatitis B virus (HBV), can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. Acute HBV infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the virus. Acute infection can — but does not always — lead to chronic infection. Chronic HBV infection is a long-term illness that occurs when the virus remains in a person’s body.

3. How do you know if you have hepatitis B? - Only a blood test can tell for sure.

4. How is HBV spread? - HBV is spread when blood or other body fluids from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected. People can become infected with the virus during activities such as:

- a. Birth (spread from an infected mother to her baby during birth),
- b. Sex with an infected partner,
- c. Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment,
- d. Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person,
- e. Direct contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person, or
- f. Exposure to blood from needle sticks or other sharp instruments.

5. How is HBV NOT spread? - Hepatitis B is not spread through food or water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing or by casual contact. Blood donors and the blood supply are routinely screened for blood-borne diseases like HBV and pose virtually no risk of HBV transmission.

6. How long does it take for a blood test, such as HBsAg, to be positive after exposure to HBV? - HBsAg will begin to be detected in an infected person’s blood on the average of 4 weeks (range of 1 to 9 weeks) after exposure to the virus. About 1 out of 2 patients will no longer be infectious by 7 weeks after onset

of symptoms and all patients who do not remain chronically infected will be HBsAg-negative by 15 weeks after onset of symptoms.

7. If a person has symptoms, how long does it take for symptoms to occur after exposure to HBV? – Not all persons infected with HBV develop acute symptoms. Symptoms occur in about 70% of patients, and are more likely to occur in adults than in children. If symptoms occur, they occur on the average of 12 weeks (range of 9 to 21 weeks) after exposure to hepatitis HBV. Even infected persons without symptoms can spread the virus to others.

8. What are the symptoms of hepatitis B? - Sometimes a person with HBV infection has no symptoms at all. The older you are, the more likely you are to have symptoms. You might be infected with HBV (and be spreading the virus) and not know it. If you have symptoms, they might include:

- a. Yellow skin or yellowing of the whites of your eyes (jaundice),
- b. Tiredness,
- c. Loss of appetite,
- d. Nausea,
- e. Abdominal discomfort,
- f. Dark urine,
- g. Clay-colored bowel movements, and
- h. Joint pain.

9. How common is HBV infection in the United States? - People of all ages get hepatitis B disease and about 5,000 die per year. In 2007, an estimated 43,000 people were newly infected with HBV.

10. What are the risk factors for HBV infection? – Although anyone can get HBV, some people are at greater risk, such as those who:

- a. Have sex with an infected person,
- b. Have multiple sex partners,
- c. Have a sexually transmitted disease,
- d. Are men who have sexual contact with other men,
- e. Inject drugs or share needles, syringes, or other drug equipment,
- f. Live with a person who has chronic Hepatitis B,
- g. Are infants born to infected mothers,
- h. Are exposed to blood on the job,

i. Are hemodialysis patients, or

j. Travel to countries with moderate to high rates of Hepatitis B.

11. Is there a cure for hepatitis B? - There are no medications available for recently acquired (acute) HBV infection. There are antiviral drugs available for the treatment of chronic HBV infection. People with chronic HBV infection should seek the care or consultation of a doctor with experience treating Hepatitis B disease.

12. Is there a vaccine for HBV? – Yes. A HBV vaccine has been available since the 1980's, however it must be given in multiple doses to be effective. HBV vaccine is recommended for all persons at high risk of exposure to the virus, including occupational exposure. It is also a routine component of the children immunization schedule in the United States. HBV vaccine is not a substitute for reducing risky behaviors that result in exposure to infected blood, or other body fluids, since not all people are protected against HBV after vaccination; and other agents, such as HIV, are transmitted by the same risky behaviors.

13. If you are pregnant, should you worry about hepatitis B? - Yes, you should get a blood test to check for HBV infection early in your pregnancy. This test is called hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg). If you test HBsAg-negative early in pregnancy, but continue behaviors that put you at risk for HBV infection (e.g., multiple sex partners, injection drug use), you should be retested for HBsAg close to delivery. If your HBsAg test is positive, this means you are infected with HBV and can give the virus to your baby. Babies who get HBV at birth might develop chronic HBV infection that can lead to cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer. If your blood test is positive, your baby should receive the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine, along with another shot, hepatitis B immune globulin (called HBIG), at birth. The second dose of vaccine should be given at aged 1-2 months and the third dose at aged 6 months (but not before aged 24 weeks).

14. Can I donate blood if I have had any type of viral hepatitis? – No, if you have ever tested positive for HBV experts recommend that you do not donate blood, organs, or semen because this can put the recipient at great risk of becoming infected.

15. How long can HBV survive outside the body? - HBV can survive outside the body at least 7 days and still be capable of causing infection.

16. What do you use to remove HBV from environmental surfaces? - You should clean up any blood spills - including dried blood, which can still be infectious with a mixture of bleach and water (one part bleach to 10 parts water). Gloves should always be used when cleaning up any blood spills.

17. For more information about Hepatitis B:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/b/index.htm>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information related to you.

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