



# Huron County Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.



## Hepatitis B

### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B can be a short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic) illness.

### What is the difference between short-term and long-term Hepatitis B?

Short-term (acute) Hepatitis B causes sickness within 6 months of being exposed. For unknown reasons, some people get better on their own without any treatment. Some people who get the Hepatitis B virus go on to have long-term Hepatitis B. The younger a person is the more likely they will have long-term Hepatitis B.

Long-term (chronic) Hepatitis B is an illness that occurs when the Hepatitis B virus remains in the body. It can lead to problems like liver damage, scarring, failure or cancer.

### How is Hepatitis B Spread?

Hepatitis B is passed from person to person through blood, semen, or other body fluids. A person can get Hepatitis B during activities such as:

- Birth (passed from mother to baby during birth)
- Sex
- Sharing needles to use drugs
- Sharing household items like razors or toothbrushes
- Direct contact with infected blood or open sores
- Exposure to blood from needle sticks or other sharp instruments.



### Can Hepatitis B be spread through sex?

Yes, Hepatitis B is mainly spread through sex. In fact, two out of three people with short-term Hepatitis B get it through having sex with an infected person.

### What are the ways that you cannot get Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is not spread by sharing silverware, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.



## What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Many people who have Hepatitis B feel fine and do not know they have it. If people do start to feel sick, it can take weeks or years. Signs of sickness for both short-term and long-term Hepatitis B can include:

- Fever
- Always feeling tired
- Not wanting to eat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark urine (pee)
- Grey-colored stools (poop)
- Joint pain
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)

## Can I prevent myself from getting Hepatitis B?

The best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting the Hepatitis B vaccine. Other ways to keep yourself from getting Hepatitis B are to:

- Use a protective barrier (condom or female condom) every time when having sex
- Do not share needles
- Do not share items that might have blood on them, even in a tiny amount
- Only get tattoos or piercings from a shop with an up-to-date license
- If pregnant, get regular prenatal screenings

## How do I know if I have Hepatitis B?

A doctor can tell you if you have Hepatitis B after taking a blood test.

## How is Hepatitis B treated?

There is no medicine available to treat short-term Hepatitis B. When it is caught, doctors recommend plenty of rest, eating healthy, and drinking lots of fluids. Some people may need to be hospitalized.

Long term Hepatitis B is sometimes treated but not always. Not every person with long term Hepatitis B needs to take medicine. People with long-term Hepatitis B should go to the doctor often to see if they have liver disease. To protect your liver, do not drink alcohol or do drugs.

## Can a baby be protected from getting Hepatitis B during birth?

A baby can be protected from getting Hepatitis B from his or her mother by getting two vaccines before they leave the hospital (HBIG and the first Hepatitis B vaccine) and then 2-3 additional shots of vaccine over the next 1-15 months. If a baby is not vaccinated he or she can have a long term Hepatitis B infection which can lead to serious health problems including liver damage, liver cancer, and death.

## Do babies need the Hepatitis B vaccine if a pregnant woman does not have Hepatitis B?

Yes. All babies should get their first Hepatitis B shot before leaving the hospital. Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all babies so that they will be protected from a serious disease.

## For more information:

Call Huron County Public Health at 419-668-1652 or visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)

