

Hepatitis means swelling of the liver. Hepatitis can be caused by chemicals, drugs, alcohol and viruses. Only hepatitis caused by a virus can be spread to other people.

Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. It can cause chronic (lifelong) liver infection, scarring of the liver, liver cancer and death.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of hepatitis B may include:

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting or stomach ache
- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Dark urine
- Light or grey colored stool (poop)

Some people have few or no symptoms. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than children. Symptoms usually begin within 3 months of being exposed to the virus.

TREATMENT

Most (about 9 of 10) adults with hepatitis B get better on their own. Some people who have hepatitis B cannot fight the virus and get chronic (lifelong) infection. About 1 of 10 adults will get chronic infection. Young children are more likely to get chronic infection (9 of 10 infants, and 1 in 4 children ages 1-5 years old).

There are some medicines that can be used to treat chronic hepatitis B infection. People with chronic hepatitis B infection must see their doctor on a regular basis and talk with their doctor before taking other medicines. They must care for themselves by getting enough rest, eating healthy foods and not drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

HOW IT SPREADS

Hepatitis B spreads when a person comes into contact with the blood or body fluids of a person with hepatitis B. This can happen when:

- You have sex with an infected partner
- You share needles or other drug equipment (including water) with an infected person
- You have touched blood or open sores of an infected person
- You are stuck with a needle or sharp object that has hepatitis B on it (including tattooing and body piercing).
- You share things like razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- A child is born to an infected mother

Hepatitis B is **not** spread by hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing or sharing food.

HOW TO PREVENT HEPATITIS B – READ THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PAGE

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Vaccination

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is vaccination. There are two vaccines that protect against hepatitis B—the hepatitis B vaccine and the combination vaccine that protects against both hepatitis A and hepatitis B. Three doses are given over 6 months (0, 1 and 6 months) for lasting protection. Most children get their hepatitis B vaccine with their baby shots.

Get vaccinated against hepatitis B if you have never been vaccinated and:

- Have sex with more than one person or if your partner has sex with other people
- Are a man who has sex with men
- Have sex with someone who has chronic (lifelong) hepatitis B infection
- Live with someone with chronic hepatitis B
- Use illegal drugs
- Are exposed to contaminated tattoo or body piercing instruments
- Are exposed to blood or body fluids on the job (healthcare, law enforcement, housekeeping, janitor, etc.)
- Are from an area of the world where hepatitis B is common (ask your doctor)

If you're not sure whether you need to be vaccinated against hepatitis B, talk to your doctor.

Protect yourself against hepatitis B

Use Safer Sex Practices

Not having sex will help protect you from hepatitis B. Using condoms the right way every time you have sex also helps.

Use Safer Work Practices

If you work at a place where you might touch other people's blood or body fluids, you should wear gloves and other personal protective equipment to help protect you from hepatitis B.

Don't Share Needles

Don't use needles or drug equipment (including water for "cooking") that has been used by others. Be sure tattoo and piercing artists are licensed to practice in North Carolina. Watch to make sure they do not re-use needles or ink.

Don't Share Personal Care Items

Don't share razors, toothbrushes or other personal care items with anyone.