

## Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)

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### What is Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)?

Hepatitis B is a virus that infects and inflames the liver. It is present in both the blood and body fluids of infected people. About 3300 new cases of HBV are reported each year in the United States, but the actual number may be up to ten times higher. Most individuals with HBV are contagious for approximately 6 months. One in 10 infected individuals can become chronic carriers and remain contagious for life.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms begin an average of 90 days (range: six weeks to six months) after exposure, and may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored stool
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Joint pain
- Jaundice

Many people infected with Hepatitis B have no symptoms.

### What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Contact your healthcare provider.

### How long is a person contagious?

Up to six months or for life. Follow-up consult with a healthcare provider is recommended.

### How is HBV spread?

HBV is spread through exposure to infectious blood and/or bodily fluids, including:

- Sex with an infected partner
- Injection drug use that involves sharing needles, syringes, or drug-preparation equipment or inhaled nasal paraphernalia
- Birth to an infected mother
- Contact with blood or open sores of an infected person
- Needle sticks or sharp instrument exposures
- Sharing items such as razors, toothbrushes, ear rings or nail care devices with an infected person

### How is HBV diagnosed?

- A blood test.

### How is HBV treated?

Antiviral drugs are available for those with chronic hepatitis B infection.

### Is there a vaccine available?

Yes, a vaccine is available. Hepatitis B vaccine is very safe as it has no human blood or blood products. The vaccine is a series of three separate injections over a 6-month period.

### How can I prevent the spread of HBV?

- Get the Hepatitis B vaccine series.

### Get tested if you have:

- Injected drugs intravenously
- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992
- Been diagnosed with HIV
- Received long-term hemodialysis treatment
- Signs or symptoms of liver disease
- Had a known exposure
- Born to a HBV-positive mother, or live with infected person
- Multiple sex partners
- Currently pregnant
- Ever been diagnosed with STD

### If you are diagnosed with HBV:

- Be aware that your blood and body fluids are infectious to others
- Do not donate blood
- Inform your dental and medical provider
- Inform your sexual partners and properly use latex condoms
- Make sure sex partners and household contacts are immunized for Hepatitis B
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, or needles, ear rings or nail care devices
- Avoid blood exposure to others

### For further information visit:

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

**Report Hepatitis B cases to the Saint Louis  
County Department of Health by calling  
314 615 1630**