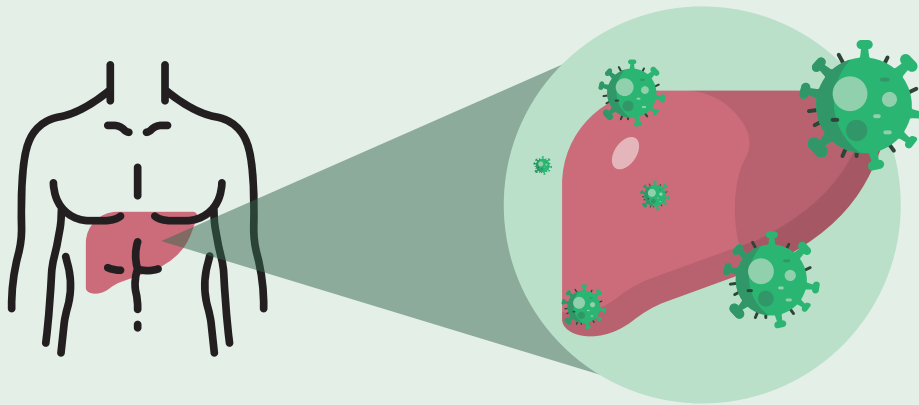




# What is Hepatitis B?

**Hepatitis B**, is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. For some people with hepatitis B, infections are “acute,” or only last for a short time. For others, hepatitis B can become chronic, lasting longer and possibly causing more liver damage if untreated<sup>1</sup>. Indigenous people are 10 times more likely to be infected with chronic hepatitis<sup>2</sup>. Opioid use has led to an increase in the number of people who inject drugs in the U.S., which in turn increases risk of blood-borne infections, including hepatitis B virus infection through the use of shared equipment<sup>3</sup>. Fortunately, you can prevent hepatitis B with a vaccine. We can all take small steps to prevent hepatitis B and protect our livers!



## How is it spread?

Hepatitis B is spread when infected blood, semen, or other bodily fluids enter the body of someone who is not infected.

The virus can be spread through the following behaviors:

- ▶ Sharing needles, syringes, or drug preparation equipment with someone who is infected with hepatitis B
- ▶ Having vaginal or anal sex with someone who is infected with hepatitis B
- ▶ Health care and public safety workers exposed to blood on the job
- ▶ From an infected mother to infant in childbirth
- ▶ Sharing household items such as razors or toothbrushes with someone infected with HBV

**Hepatitis B is not spread through breastfeeding, sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, sneezing, or ingesting contaminated food or water.**

## What are the symptoms?

Most people do not have any symptoms when they are first infected but some may. Symptoms of acute hepatitis B include: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, or yellow color in the skin or eyes. Without any signs, a person may not know they are infected and may pass the virus to others.

## Protect

### How can I protect myself and my relatives?

- ▶ The best way to prevent hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated. The hepatitis B vaccine is a two, three, or four-dose series of shots that can fully protect you against the virus. Talk to your doctor today to learn if the hepatitis B vaccine is right for you.
- ▶ Not sharing needles, injection drug equipment used to snort or smoke drugs.
- ▶ Practicing safer sex, including condom use



## Detect

### Testing Guidelines

- ▶ Getting tested for HBV helps protect you and your loved ones. Risk factors include: injecting drugs, household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B, medical people with HIV infection, people who receive chemotherapy, and people on hemodialysis. All pregnant women are routinely tested for Hepatitis B during each pregnancy.

Other people who should be tested for hepatitis B are:

People who inject drugs  
People with HIV infection  
Men who have sex with men  
Household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B  
People requiring immunosuppressive therapy (like chemotherapy)

Hemodialysis patients  
People with hepatitis C  
People with elevated ALT levels  
Infants born to HBV-infected mothers  
People born in certain countries where hepatitis B is common



## Treat

If test results show that you have the virus, talk with a doctor who has worked with people with hepatitis B infections. While there isn't a cure, treatment may reduce the risk of further liver damage

### How is acute hepatitis B treated?

There is no medication available to treat acute hepatitis B. For people with mild symptoms, doctors will recommend rest, good nutrition, and fluids.

### How is chronic hepatitis B treated?

Several medications have been approved to treat people who have chronic hepatitis B. People who start hepatitis B treatment may need to take the medication long-term because there currently isn't a cure.



American Indian  
Cancer Foundation.

612.314.4848

3001 Broadway Street NE,  
Suite 185  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

info@AICAF.org  
americanindiancancer.org



1. "What Is Hepatitis B - FAQ." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 28 July 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm#overview>.
2. Razavi and Razavi-Shearer, The Polaris Observatory. World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Viral Hepatitis, Aug 8 2017.
3. Momin, Behnoosh. (2019). A Call for Action: Responding to the Increasing Incidence of Liver Cancer in the United States. <https://blogs.cdc.gov/cancer/2019/05/09/a-call-for-action-responding-to-the-increasing-incidence-of-liver-cancer-in-the-united-states/>
4. "What Is Hepatitis B - FAQ." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 28 July 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm#bFAQ#01>.