

Fact Sheet

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B can be an acute, short-term infection or a chronic, long-lasting infection. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up over half of the people in the United States living with chronic hepatitis B. African Americans have the second-highest rate of chronic hepatitis B. If you are living with chronic hepatitis B, talk to your health care provider about starting a treatment regimen.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) causes inflammation of the liver. It is spread by:

- Having unprotected sex with an infected person
- Sharing contaminated razors, toothbrushes, or needles
- Coming in contact with infected blood like from an open wound or transfusion
- Mother to baby during vaginal or cesarean birth

Hepatitis B infection may be acute (short term) or chronic (long term).

Acute HBV symptoms can last from a few weeks to up to six months and may include:

- Fatigue
- Yellow eyes and skin (jaundice)
- Fever
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain
- Dark urine
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Abdominal pain

Chronic HBV infection occurs when the virus remains in a person's body. People living with chronic HBV can spread the virus to others, even if they do not feel or look sick themselves. Over time, chronic HBV can cause scarring of the liver, liver failure, liver cancer, or even death.



Know your status

If you think you've been exposed to HBV, ask your health care provider to get tested. Blood tests can determine whether a person was infected in the past, is currently infected, or has never been infected.

Hepatitis B treatments

People living with chronic hepatitis B should be monitored regularly by their health care provider for signs of liver disease and evaluated for possible treatment. There are three types of treatment options for chronic HBV.

- **Antiviral medications:** Medications taken by mouth to help your body fight the virus and reduce the risk of liver damage.
- **Interferon injections:** Injections consisting of interferons, which are substances produced by cells in the body to help fight the infection.
- **Liver transplant:** If chronic hepatitis B leads to liver failure or liver cancer, you may need a liver transplant as a last resort. A transplant is a surgical procedure that removes your unhealthy liver and replaces it with a healthy liver from a donor.

Hepatitis B and clinical trials

FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.clinicaltrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/healthequity.