

# Hepatitis B (HBV)

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes infection of the liver. Most people who get hepatitis B recover on their own and develop antibodies to protect them from repeat infections. Less than 5% of adults with hepatitis B will continue to live with the virus.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can take two to six months to appear. Not all people with the hepatitis B virus will develop symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dark urine
- Pale stools
- Stomach pain
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes)

## How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B can be spread from one person to another through exposure to infected blood and body fluids. Some ways hepatitis B may be spread include:

- Unprotected sex with an infected person
- Medical equipment that has not been cleaned properly between uses
- Pregnancy or childbirth when a mother is hepatitis B positive
- Exposure to, or contact with infected blood through breaks in the skin or in the lining of the nose and mouth
- Using shared or unclean tools used for tattooing, body piercing or acupuncture that pierce the skin
- Sharing drug equipment like needles, straws and pipes
- Sharing personal items like razors or toothbrushes

Hepatitis B is not spread by water, food or casual contact that occurs at most schools or workplaces.

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

A blood test is the only way to find out if you have hepatitis B. Many people who have hepatitis B do not know they have it.

## What is the treatment for hepatitis B?

Not all people with hepatitis B infection need to be treated. A combination of medications can be used to treat hepatitis B. Speak with your healthcare provider to see if treatment is right for you.

There is a vaccine available to protect you from getting hepatitis B. You may already be immune to hepatitis B due to the grade 7 hepatitis B vaccination programs which began in 1994, and the catch up program that started later in 1996 for grade 10 to OAC students. Approximately 85% of all students have been vaccinated against the virus. Some adults may also be eligible to receive publicly funded hepatitis B vaccinations.

### Adapted from:

- Health Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Canadian Liver Foundation