

WHAT IS HEP B?

...AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

HEP B VS HEP C

| | HEP B | HEP C |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| TRANSMITTED BLOOD TO BLOOD | ✓ | ✓ |
| TRANSMITTED SEXUALLY | ✓ | ✗ |
| VACCINATION | ✓ | ✗ |
| CURE | ✗ | ✓ |

ACUTE HEP B

ACUTE HEP B is an infection *within the first 6 months*.

About 90% of healthy adults clear the virus within this time however it is still possible to pass the virus onto your partners, friends or family members.

It is important to have a good working relationship with you GP during this time. Some tips for taking care of your liver include avoiding alcohol and limiting smoking, eating healthy and avoiding fatty/greasy foods.

CHRONIC HEP B

CHRONIC HEP B is an infection *lasting longer than 6 months*.

5-10% of adults with acute hep B will develop chronic hep B as it can sit in your body with virtually no symptoms for many years.

If the virus was contracted as a child there is a 90% chance the virus will develop into chronic hep B. So knowing your hep B status is important.

Working with your GP to manage and monitor your chronic hep B is important as treatments are available and can help to stop the virus from doing any further damage to your liver.

ARE YOU ON HEP C TREATMENT?

Please let the GP know when you are getting tested and/or vax'd.

For any questions in relation to hep B vax/testing/treatment contact:

HEPATITISVICTORIA

Hepatitis INFOLINE: 1800 703 003

Website: www.hepvic.org.au

HARM REDUCTION VICTORIA

128 Peel Street, North Melbourne

Phone: (03) 9329 1500

Website: hrvic.org.au

WHAT IS A VACCINE?

A vaccine teaches the immune system to produce antibodies that "remember" how to fight the virus so you become immune – usually forever.

It is **NOT** the hep B virus and it can't cause the disease.

WHAT IS HEP B AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- It can be spread by blood to blood contact and unprotected sex.
- Hep B can live in the body with virtually no symptoms for many years so it is important to know your hep B status
- **People who inject are at some risk.**
- There is no cure for hep B, however there are good medications.

HEPATITIS B IS A VIRUS THAT AFFECTS THE LIVER. IT CAN LEAD TO CIRRHOSIS (SCARRING OF THE LIVER) AND LIVER CANCER.

BUT vaccination **CAN** give you immunity and is available at this centre:

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE HEP B?

STEP 1: BLOOD TEST

A **BLOOD TEST** can be done at this service. If you have any worries about having blood taken or trouble with your veins have a chat to the nurse beforehand. After about 5 days you will get a call to come in and discuss the results.

STEP 2: RESULTS

The clinic will discuss your options with you depending on results.

RESULTS will usually be one of the following:

You are immune

No vax needed

You do not have immunity

Vaccination advised

You have acute hep B

See Doctor for monitoring

You have chronic hep B

See Doctor for treatment

STEP 3: FOLLOWING UP

VACCINATION ADVISED

If you're not immune to hep B, you should consider vaccination.

There are **3 shots** over **6 months** so you will need to come back to the health centre to complete the vaccination.

SEE DOCTOR FOR TREATMENT



You need to discuss your treatment options with a Doctor. Chat to a worker here for an appointment.

Although there is no cure there are very effective treatments that help manage hep B.

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

A hep B vaccination is given in 3 shots over 6 months.

To get full immunity to hep B you need to get all three shots.

You will be called as a reminder by the service before each jab.

1ST vaccination straight away - when you get blood test result

2ND one **1 month** later. Date: _____

3RD one **5 months** after 2nd Date: _____

PREVENTION IS THE BEST CURE

- ☀️ Getting vaccinated IS THE BEST PREVENTION.
- ☀️ Avoid blood-to-blood contact.
- ☀️ Practice safe sex and use a condom.
- ☀️ NEVER share injecting equipment (including needles, water, spoons, filters and tourniquets) and dispose of these safely.
- ☀️ Cover open wounds or cuts with band aids and clean up any blood spills with disposable gloves and bleach.
- ☀️ Don't share items that may have traces of blood on them like razors, tweezers or toothbrushes.

HEP B SYMPTOMS

It is important to remember that many people with either acute or chronic hep B don't experience any symptoms at all. However as your immune system reacts to the virus you may feel unwell and experience symptoms such as feeling sick, tiredness, fever, dark urine, joint or stomach pain, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) or loss of appetite.

TREATMENT FOR HEP B:

Yes! Some people with chronic (long-term) hep B may benefit from treatment to reduce the chance of getting liver scarring (cirrhosis) or liver cancer, however there are no current treatments that cure hepatitis B completely.

1. Not everybody needs treatment straight away, if your immune system is doing a good job of suppressing the virus there is no need to take medication. However working with your doctor to closely monitor your liver function is important to stop any further damage.

2. If you do need to take medication, the 2 most common forms of treatment are Entecavir or Tenofovir - these are daily pills, and have relatively few side effects. These treatments will not cure the virus but will keep the viral load down and aims to prevent ongoing liver inflammation, which in turn will help to prevent complications like cirrhosis or liver cancer.

If your hep B is inactive you will be less likely to have any further health problems from the virus. In rare cases however, hep B can reactivate. So it is very important that you stay in contact with your doctor and have regular liver check-ups and blood tests.

DO I HAVE TO TELL ANYONE THAT I HAVE HEP B?

Generally speaking, in Victoria you are not legally required to tell anybody you have hep B. In fact, you are protected by the Disability Discrimination Act (1992). However you are required to tell someone you have hep B if:

- ✪ If your job requires you to do “invasive” procedures in exposure prone settings such as taking blood or anything involving needles, for example, Doctors, nurses or dentists.
- ✪ If you wanted to donate blood, blood products or semen.
- ✪ If you want to join the Australian Defence Force.
- ✪ For insurance and superannuation purposes.
- ✪ The laws vary from state to state. In Victoria you are not required by law to tell a person who you have sexual contact with that you have hep B however you are obligated to take precautions such as using condoms and lube before engaging in sexual contact.

TESTING FOR HEP B:

| TEST | ABBREVIATION | WHAT IT SHOWS |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Hepatitis B surface antigen | HBsAg | Shows that the person is infected with hepatitis B. It can be detected during acute and chronic infection. |
| Hepatitis B surface antibody | HBsAb or Anti-HBs | Shows that the person has developed immunity to hepatitis B. It can be detected in people who have recovered from hepatitis B or been vaccinated against hepatitis B. |
| Hepatitis B e antigen | HBeAg | Shows that hepatitis B virus is multiplying. |
| Hepatitis B e antibody | HBeAb or Anti-HBe | Shows that the person's immune system has responded against hepatitis B and the virus is not actively replicating. |
| Hepatitis B core antibody | HBcAb or Anti-HBc | Shows that the person has been infected with hepatitis B but does not provide any protection against infection. |
| Hepatitis B virus DNA | HBV DNA | Measures the amount of hepatitis B virus in the blood stream and indicates how actively the virus is multiplying. |