

Prevention and Control Measures Hepatitis B

What is Hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B can be a serious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. Acute Hepatitis B refers to a short-term infection that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is infected with the virus. The infection can range in severity from a mild illness with few or no symptoms to a serious condition requiring hospitalization.
- Some people, especially adults, are able to clear, or get rid of, the virus without treatment. People who clear the virus become immune and cannot get infected with the Hepatitis B virus again.
 - **Chronic Hepatitis B:** refers to a lifelong infection with the Hepatitis B virus. The likelihood that a person develops a chronic infection depends on the age at which someone becomes infected. Up to 90% of infants infected with the Hepatitis B virus will develop a chronic infection. In contrast, about 5% of adults will develop chronic Hepatitis B. Over time, chronic Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death.

How does Hepatitis B spread?

- The Hepatitis B virus is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected. The virus can be spread through:
 - **Sex with an infected person:** Among adults, Hepatitis B is often spread through sexual contact.
 - **Drug use injection:** Sharing needles, syringes, and any other equipment to inject drugs with someone infected with Hepatitis B can spread the virus.
 - **Outbreaks:** While uncommon, poor infection control has resulted in outbreaks of Hepatitis B in healthcare settings.
 - **Birth:** Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Worldwide, most people with Hepatitis B were infected with the virus as an infant.
 - Hepatitis B is **not** spread through breastfeeding, sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing. Unlike some forms of hepatitis, Hepatitis B is also not spread by contaminated food or water.

What are the symptoms?

- Dark urine
- Feeling tired
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)



Alabama Department of Public Health

Immunization Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

1-800-469-4599 <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/measles.html> 03/09/26

Where can I find more information?

- Ask your doctor
- Call the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at 1-800-469-4599
- Go to cdc.gov and type Hepatitis B in the SEARCH box.

Who is more likely to develop Hepatitis B disease?

- Infants born to people with hepatitis B.
- People born in certain countries where hepatitis B is common.
- People born in the United States who were not vaccinated as infants and whose parents were born in countries with high rates of hepatitis B.
- People who have hepatitis C.
- People who have sexually transmitted infections, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- People who are on dialysis.
- People who have liver damage or inflammation.
- People who have been in jail or prison.
- People who inject drugs (PWID) or share needles, syringes, and other types of drug equipment.
- Sex partners of people who have hepatitis B.
- Men who have sex with men.
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Is there a vaccine against Hepatitis B?

- If you get the three-shot series, your doctor will give them over a 6-month period. If you get the vaccine that is two doses, you will get them about one month apart. You need to get all of the shots to be fully protected.

Prevention and Control Measures:

- Initiate control measures *within 3 days of initial case notification*
- Identify close contacts/ high risk
 - All sexual, needle-sharing, and household contacts of people with hepatitis B are at high risk of acquiring the disease. Case investigation shall be performed to determine exposed household,



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sexual, and needle-sharing contacts. If the date of infection is unknown, identify sexual and needle-sharing contacts during the previous six months

- Take careful blood precautions. Cover all cuts and open sores. Throw away used personal items (such as tissues, sanitary napkins, and tampons) in a sealed plastic bag. Wash your hands well after touching your own blood or body fluids. Wash clothing and linen soiled with blood in detergent and water. Tell all sex partners you have hepatitis B. Use condoms during sexual intercourse unless your partner has had hepatitis B or has been vaccinated against hepatitis B. Tell dentists and doctors that you are hepatitis B positive so that they can use extra precaution. Advise sexual partners and family members to see their doctors about screening and vaccination for hepatitis B. Avoid sharing chewing gum, toothbrushes, razors, scissors, nail files or anything that may have come in contact with your blood or body fluids. Never share syringes and needles. Never donate blood, plasma, body organs, tissue, or sperm
- Obtain immunization history of case/contacts
- Provide education that includes basic information about the disease
 - As needed, inform of communicability, incubation period, symptoms, transmission, complications, and isolation
 - Instruct cases and contacts on the necessary isolation or any other restrictions
 - Counsel contacts to watch for signs or symptoms of occurring within 6 months after exposure and to seek medical care promptly
 - Their PCP should be notified, and proper specimens taken

****Note that the steps are not ordered by priority since several of these steps are conducted simultaneously****



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