



FACT SHEET

Hepatitis B

What is it?

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes infection of the liver.

Symptoms

- Symptoms usually begin 6 weeks to 6 months after exposure to the virus (average 2 months). The duration and severity of illness varies. Most people recover within 3 weeks.
- In adults, early symptoms include nausea (upset stomach), loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of energy, fever and abdominal cramps (stomach or side pain).
- Dark yellow or brown urine, pale or white-colored stool (bowel movements), and jaundice (yellow eyes or skin) may also be present.
- Persons can have all or only a few of the above signs and symptoms.
- **Nearly all infants and children and 50% of adults with a new infection have no symptoms whatsoever.**
- Over 90% of infants, 50% of children, and 5% of adults with acute hepatitis B will develop chronic or long-term infection.
- Chronic hepatitis B may lead to liver disease including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

How is it spread?

- The virus lives in the liver and is present in the blood and certain body fluids
- Spread occurs through contact with virus-containing blood and body fluids, such as sharing of injection drug equipment, sexual contact (homosexual and heterosexual), during childbirth, household contact with a person who has hepatitis B, and sharing of personal hygiene items (such as nail clippers, razors, toothbrushes).
- The amount of virus is highest in blood and serous fluid (yellowish or clear fluid that drains from cuts/sores) but is also present in smaller amounts in semen, vaginal fluids, and menstrual blood.
- Although small amounts of virus can be found in saliva, saliva is not likely to spread hepatitis B, *unless saliva from an infected person gets*

into a cut or sore, for example, following a bite.

- Hepatitis B is not spread by kissing or sneezing

Diagnosis and treatment

- Hepatitis A is diagnosed with a blood tests.
- There is no medicine or treatment for acute hepatitis B
- Rest, a low fat diet, and plenty of fluids are recommended. Avoid drugs and alcohol during any acute (new) illness.

Prevention

- If you use injection drugs, do not share needles, drugs, mixing solution, tourniquets, or works.
- Practice safe sex; use condoms for any sexual activity, including oral, anal, and vaginal sex.
- Do not share personal hygiene items, such as razors, nail clippers or files, toothbrushes, or washcloths.
- Cover all cuts and open sores with a bandage.
- Hepatitis B vaccine provides protection against hepatitis B for many years. The vaccination series consists of 3 doses that are given over 6 months.

Who should get the hepatitis A vaccine?

- All babies and children 19 years of age or younger.
- Gay and bisexual men.
- Anyone with more than one sex partner in a 6 month period.
- Illicit drug users (injection and non-injection)
- International travelers to areas where hepatitis A is common: includes all areas of the world except Canada, Western Europe & Scandinavia, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia.
- Health care and public safety workers with exposure to blood in the workplace.
- Persons with chronic liver diseases, including hepatitis C.
- Household contacts and sexual partners of persons with hepatitis B.
- Persons born in countries with high rates of hepatitis B and their family members.

- Persons with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophiliacs.
- Clients in institutions for the developmentally disabled.
- Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders.
- Patients receiving chronic kidney dialysis (hemodialysis).
- Anyone else who wants protection against hepatitis B.

What is Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG)?

- Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) is a blood plasma product that can prevent hepatitis B if given within 14 days of exposure to an infected individual.
- HBIG is effective 85-90% of the time and protects against hepatitis B for about 3 months.
- HBIG is necessary if the exposed person has not been vaccinated against hepatitis B and has never had a hepatitis B infection.
- HBIG is given in combination with the 3 dose hepatitis B vaccine series after exposure to the blood or sexual body fluids of a person with hepatitis B.
- HBIG and hepatitis B vaccine may be recommended for you if you have had sexual contact or a blood exposure from someone who has hepatitis B.

Report all cases to El Paso Department of Public Health by calling 915-212-6520