



LENAWEE COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# Hepatitis B (Hep B)

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## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a vaccine-preventable liver infection caused by Hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV is transmitted when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the virus enters the body of someone who is uninfected. Hepatitis B can range from a mild, short-term, acute illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, long-term, chronic infection. You can test for this virus with a blood draw at the Lenawee County Health Department.

## How is Hepatitis B Spread?

- Vaginal, anal, and oral sex
- Sharing needles and syringes
- Tattooing and body piercing
- Sharing razors and toothbrushes
- Childbirth (infected mom passes Hep B to baby)
- NOT spread by hugging, kissing, or by sharing food or drink

## Symptoms of Hepatitis B

Symptoms may appear 6 weeks to 6 months after exposure and may last a few weeks to a few months. Most people do not feel sick.

- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Joint and muscle pain
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine and light-colored stools

## Who is at risk?

- Injection drug users
- Sex partners of an infected persons
- Having multiple sex partners
- Being a male who has sex with males
- Having a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Living in a household of an infected person
- Healthcare workers
- Infants born to infected mothers
- Receiving dialysis

## Treating Hepatitis B

### For acute (new or short duration) hepatitis B infection

- There is no medication to treat acute hepatitis B. Healthcare providers recommend rest, fluids and eating a healthy diet. More serious cases will need to be hospitalized.

### For chronic (long-term) hepatitis B infection

- There are several medications approved to treat people who have chronic hepatitis B. For some people with hepatitis B, these medications can prevent severe liver disease. People who start hepatitis B treatment may need to take medication for the rest of their lives because these medications do not lead to a cure.

## Pregnancy and Hepatitis B

If a pregnant woman tests positive, she can pass hepatitis B to her baby during childbirth. Infants born to a hepatitis B infected mother require Hep B vaccine and hepatitis B immune globulin within 12 hours of birth to protect them from infection. Administering the first dose of Hep B vaccine soon after birth to all infants acts as a safety net, reducing the risk for perinatal transmission. Most babies do not have symptoms, but they can develop chronic Hepatitis B, which can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.

## How is Hepatitis B Prevented?

- The best way is to be vaccinated
- Do not share needles, razors, toothbrushes, chewing gum, nail clippers, washcloths, piercing equipment, or diabetic testing equipment
- Use condoms every time you have sex
- If you are a healthcare worker, follow routine precautions
- Clean contaminated surfaces wearing latex gloves with disinfectant

*This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call the Lenawee County Health Department at (517) 264-5226*