

FACT SHEET

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B can be an acute, short-term infection or a chronic, long-lasting infection. Asian American people represent 7 percent of the U.S. population and more than half of the people in the U.S. living with chronic hepatitis B. African American people have the second-highest rate of chronic hepatitis B. If you are living with chronic hepatitis B, talk to your health care provider about starting a treatment regimen.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) causes inflammation of the liver. It is spread by:

- Having unprotected sex with an infected person
- Sharing contaminated razors, toothbrushes, or needles
- Coming in contact with infected blood like from an open wound or transfusion
- Mother to baby during vaginal or cesarean birth

Hepatitis B infection may be acute (short term) or chronic (long term).

Acute hepatitis B symptoms can last from a few weeks to up to six months and may include:

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Yellow eyes and skin (jaundice)
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Dark urine
- Nausea and/or vomiting

Chronic hepatitis B infection occurs when the virus remains in a person's body. People living with chronic HBV can spread the virus to others, even if they do not feel or look sick themselves. Over time, chronic HBV can cause scarring of the liver, liver failure, liver cancer, or even death.

Hepatitis B prevention

The best way to prevent hepatitis B infections is by getting vaccinated. Hepatitis B vaccines are safe, effective, and are recommended for everyone up to 59 years of age. Hepatitis B vaccines are also available to adults 60 years and older. Talk to a health care provider or local health department about getting vaccinated against hepatitis B at any age.

Know your status

All adults aged 18 years and older should get screened for hepatitis B at least once in their lifetime. Infants, pregnant people, and people at increased risk should also be screened. Talk to a health care provider about your risk for Hepatitis B and how to get tested.

Hepatitis B treatments

People living with chronic hepatitis B should be monitored regularly by their health care provider for signs of liver disease and evaluated for possible treatment. There are three types of treatment options for chronic HBV.

- **Antiviral medications:** Medications taken by mouth to help your body fight the virus and reduce the risk of liver damage.
- **Interferon injections:** Injections consisting of interferons, which are substances produced by cells in the body to help fight the infection.
- **Liver transplant:** If chronic hepatitis B leads to liver failure or liver cancer, then a liver transplant may be needed as a last resort. A transplant is a surgical procedure that removes the unhealthy liver and replaces it with a healthy liver from a donor.

Hepatitis B and clinical trials

FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.ClinicalTrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/HealthEquity.