# Hepatitis B Facts and Information

It’s important to understand the different types of hepatitis, their effects on the liver, treatment, and how to prevent becoming infected.

September 11, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

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Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. There are many strains of hepatitis. Hepatitis A, B, C, D, E. Hepatitis A, B, and C are the most common in the U.S. with hepatitis C being the most prevalent.

It’s important to understand the different types of hepatitis, their effects on the liver, treatment, and how to prevent becoming infected. There are two types of hepatitis that can become chronic, meaning a condition lasting longer than 6 months and considered long-term.

These are hepatitis B referred to as hep B or HBV and hepatitis C commonly referred to as hep C or HCV. Both can have long term damaging effects on the liver.

Hepatitis B is an infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). The CDC states, “For some people, hepatitis B is an acute, or short-term, illness but for others, it can become a long-term, chronic infection. The risk for chronic infection is related to age at infection: approximately 90% of infected infants become chronically infected, compared with 2%–6% of adults.”

If hepatitis B becomes chronic it can lead to severe liver damage like cirrhosis or liver cancer. It is also possible to become infected with more than one type of hepatitis at the same time, or immune disease like HIV. Patients who have hepatitis B should be tested for hepatitis C and HIV as well as other extrahepatic conditions.

Transmission can happen through:

- If you have ever had a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to July 1992
- Received a clotting factor made before 1987
- Have ever had hemodialysis
- HBV contaminated needle stick or blood in a hospital or healthcare environment
- Shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs or inhaled drugs (even once)
- Have ever worked or been housed in prison
- Have HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

- Hepatitis B is spread when body fluids or blood from a person infected with HBV enters the body of someone who is not infected
- Anyone with unexplained liver problems or inflammation, including abnormal liver tests
- Borrowed razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers with someone who has Hep B
- Born to an HBV-infected mother
- Tattoos or body piercing with reused and unsterile tools
- Multiple sex partners or sex with partners who have sexually transmitted diseases, rough sex, oral and/or anal sex
- Some people may never know where they contracted HBV

Vaccine
There is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis A and hepatitis B which are a series of shots, but there is no vaccine for hepatitis C or HIV. Getting the vaccine and practicing safe procedures against transmission are recommended.

Treatment
If a person is infected, there is treatment available but currently, there is no cure for hepatitis B, but treatment can help the infection to become non-active. It is best to be seen by a liver specialist like a hepatologist or gastroenterologist, who specializes in liver disease and treatment.

If you have hepatitis C and B and talking to your liver specialist about treatment for hep C, make sure to discuss treatments that are less likely to cause hepatitis B reactivation. There are a variety of treatment options available for those who have hep C and hep B.

Have you been tested for Hepatitis B or received the vaccine?

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