Treatment for Hepatitis B

There are a variety of treatment options for hepatitis B. Treatment will depend on exposure, acute or chronic infection.

October 2, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

The best prevention method from hepatitis B is getting the vaccine for hepatitis B prior to exposure.

Treatment to Prevent Hepatitis B after exposure

If you've been exposed to hepatitis B, check with your physician to confirm if you have been vaccinated. An injection of immunoglobulin (an antibody) given within 12 hours of exposure to hepatitis B may protect you from getting sick with the infection. This only provides short-term protection. It is best to get the hepatitis B vaccine at the same time if you've not had the vaccine prior.

Treatment for Acute Hepatitis B

Acute means it's short-lived (less than 6 months). In some cases, the body's immune system is able to clear the infection in the acute phase, if this happens, you will not need medication.

Recommended patient care is rest, proper nutrition, plenty of fluids to help your body fight the infection. In severe cases, antiviral medication or a hospital stay may be needed. You will need to be monitored by your physician to make sure you clear the infection.

Treatment for Chronic Hepatitis B

Chronic infection means lasting long-term, ongoing. If patients have chronic hepatitis B, treatment with specific antiviral medications may be necessary long term to help prevent severe liver damage. A variety of treatment options are listed.

Approved Hepatitis B Medications for Adults in the United States.

Treatment for hepatitis B provided by the Hepatitis B Foundation.

Treatment is oral antivirals:

- Tenofovir disoproxil (Viread): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: Minimum one year. A

first-line treatment with an excellent resistance profile.

- Tenofovir alafenamide (Vemlidy): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: One year or longer. A first-line treatment with excellent resistance.
- Entecavir (Baraclude): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: One year or longer. A first-line treatment with excellent resistance.
- Telbivudine (Tyzeka or Sebivo): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: One year or longer. A second-line treatment option.
- Adefovir Dipivoxil (Hepsera): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: One year or longer. A second-line treatment option with regular monitoring of kidney function.
- Lamivudine (Epivir-HBV, Zeffix, or Heptodin): once a day pill. Few-side effects. Duration: One year or longer. This treatment is generally not used in the United States due to improved treatment available. This treatment is less potent than new treatments and patients can develop a drug resistance within 1 to 2 years.
- Interferon Injections: Not used as often.
- Pegylated Interferon (Pegasys): Once a week injection. Duration: 6 months to 1 year. Side effects can cause flu-like symptoms and depression.
- Interferon Alpha (Intron A): Injection taken several times a week. Duration: 6 months to 1 year or longer. Side effects: can cause flu-like symptoms, depression, and headaches.

Additional treatment options are available for children.

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