

How do I know if I've already been infected?

The only way to know if you've been infected is to have a blood test.

Should I get a blood test for hepatitis B before I get vaccinated?

Talk to your health care professional about whether you need this testing. Most people do not need a blood test. If you and your doctor decide you need testing, get your blood drawn, then start the vaccine series at the same visit. That way, you will be closer to being protected from HBV infection.

Will hepatitis B vaccine protect me from hepatitis A or hepatitis C?

No. Hepatitis A and hepatitis C are different diseases caused by different viruses. There is a vaccine for hepatitis A, but there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. For information on hepatitis A and hepatitis C, talk to your health care professional, call your local health department, or visit CDC's hepatitis Web site at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis.

How can I pay for these shots?

If you have insurance, the cost of hepatitis B vaccination may be covered. If not, sometimes these shots are available free or at low cost through special clinics or health departments. Call your local health department for details. While you're at it, find out what other vaccinations you need, too!

Everyone needs vaccinations!

If you can't afford shots or don't know where to get them, contact your local or state health department, or call the CDC-INFO Contact Center: 1-800-232-4636.

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**Every week
hundreds
of people
get**

hepatitis **B**

HBV

Protect yourself.

Get vaccinated.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). This infection is spread much like HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. It is found in the blood, semen, and vaginal secretions of an infected person. Hepatitis B is easier to catch than HIV because it can be 100 times more concentrated in an infected person's blood.

Is sex the only way I can get infected with hepatitis B?

No. Hepatitis B is a sexually transmitted disease, but it is spread in other ways, too. This is a hardy virus that can exist on almost any surface for up to one month. You can get infected through contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids. The hepatitis B virus can be spread in the following ways:

- unprotected vaginal or anal sex
- living in a household with a person with chronic (life-long) HBV infection
- sharing personal care items such as toothbrushes, razors, or nail clippers
- mother passing the infection to her infant during birth
- sharing needles or paraphernalia (works) for illegal drug use
- tattooing or body piercing with unsterile equipment
- human bites

You do not get hepatitis B from sneezing, coughing, kissing, or holding hands.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Only about half of the people who are infected get symptoms. Symptoms might include:

- yellowing of skin and whites of eyes
- dark-colored urine
- loss of appetite or nausea
- bloated and tender belly
- extreme tiredness
- fever
- pain in joints

How serious is infection with hepatitis B?

Infection with HBV can cause life-long (chronic) infection that can lead to liver scarring (cirrhosis) and liver cancer. Many people in the United States die every year from hepatitis B-related liver disease. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to prevent this disease.

Do people fully recover?

Most people who get infected as adults will fully recover. However, about 5 of 100 people will remain infectious and carry HBV in their bodies for life. This is called chronic infection. Chronically infected people do not necessarily look or feel ill, but they are at increased risk for liver failure and liver cancer and need ongoing medical care. They can also spread the virus to others.

How do I protect myself from getting infected?

Get vaccinated against hepatitis B. Three shots are usually given over a period of six months.

Tell your sex partner(s) to get vaccinated too, and always follow "safer sex" practices (for example, use a condom).

Who should get hepatitis B vaccine?

The following groups of people should get vaccinated against hepatitis B:

- Everyone 0–18 years of age
- Anyone who wants to be protected from this infection
- Sexually active people who are not in long-term, mutually monogamous relationships
- Men who have sex with men
- People seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
- Health care or public safety workers who might be exposed to blood or body fluids
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled people
- Dialysis and pre-dialysis patients
- People infected with HIV
- People in close personal contact (that is, household or sexual) with someone who has chronic HBV infection
- Current or recent injection-drug users
- Travelers to regions of the world where hepatitis B is common (Asia, Africa, the Amazon Basin in South America, the Pacific Islands, Eastern Europe, or the Middle East);
- People with chronic liver disease

Three shots will protect you from hepatitis B.