

HOW CAN HEPATITIS B BE PREVENTED

- BY GETTING VACCINATED
- By practicing safe sex
- By not sharing anything that has blood on it
- By taking precautions while handling body fluids
- By seeing your health care professional every 6-12 months to check the health of your liver
- By talking to each other

Hepatitis B Vaccine

The vaccine (e.g. Engerix-B®) consists of three shots administered at specific intervals. The cost of the vaccine varies in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that infants, children and adolescents up to age 18 receive the vaccine. It is also recommended for all high-risk adults.

Most insurance plans cover infants and children to age 19. Some people can receive the vaccine free of cost from the local public health clinic. High-risk adults may also be covered by their health insurance or can receive the vaccine through a family planning clinic.

Resources

- Hepatitis B Foundation www.hepb.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hepatitis branch
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis
American Liver Foundation
www.liverfoundation.org
Immunization Action Coalition
www.immunize.org
Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association www.apamsa.org
Stanford University: Asian Liver Center
<http://liver.stanford.edu>
National Task Force on Hepatitis B
www.hepbtaskforce.org



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The data contained in this fact sheet is provided for information only. This information does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. The Asian Community Alliance recommends that you consult your physician before pursuing any treatment.



Asian Community Alliance, Inc.

**Providing Information
for
Stronger Communities**



HEPATITIS B
What you need to know

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What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world. It is caused by the Hepatitis B virus. It infects liver cells, which can lead to liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring) or cancer of liver. The 5 year survival rate of liver cancer is less than 10%.

Hepatitis B virus is 100 times more infectious than AIDS virus. But the good news is Hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.

People who have had Hepatitis A or C infection can still contract Hepatitis B.

Approximately 5-10% of adults, 30-50% of children, and 90% of babies will not get rid of the virus and will develop chronic infection. Hepatitis B is known as the 'Silent Killer' as more than half of the infected are unaware of it.

What is chronic (life-long) Hepatitis B?

Some people who are infected with Hepatitis B never get rid of the infection from their bodies and have long-term or chronic Hepatitis B. They are infected for life and can transmit the virus to other people they come in contact with. If you have chronic Hepatitis B you are more likely to get cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver failure, and liver cancer later in life.

How is Hepatitis B Transmitted?

Most Asian Americans acquire Hepatitis B at birth or during early childhood. Hepatitis B can be transmitted by:

- Direct contact with blood and bodily fluids that contain infected blood
- Unprotected sex with an infected person
- Sharing drug needles
- Sharing earrings, razors, or toothbrushes with an infected person
- An infected mother to her newborn child at birth
- Using unsterilized needles, including tattoo or body piercing needles

Who is the high-risk person?

- A child born to mother infected with Hepatitis B
- Someone who lives in close household contact with a chronically infected individual
- Someone who has unprotected sex or have more than one sexual partner in a six month period
- Men who have sex with men
- Someone who has been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease
- Someone who shares needles and syringes
- A patient on kidney dialysis
- Health care provider or emergency responder with possible contact with bodily fluids
- Someone who lives or works in an institutional setting, such as a prison or group home

- A child who is adopted from a country where Hepatitis B is prevalent
- International travelers who expect to have close contact with residents in countries or regions where there is a high rate of Hepatitis B

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

More than two thirds of the Hepatitis B cases have no symptoms. In some, the symptoms of the disease are extreme tiredness, loss of appetite, joint pain, fever, yellow skin or eyes (jaundice). Not all infected people show these symptoms. Individuals in a high-risk category are advised to get the specific blood test done. It is possible to definitively diagnose Hepatitis B with blood tests alone.

Other Important Information regarding Hepatitis B

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1.25 million Americans are already chronically infected with Hepatitis B. More than half of the cases are Asians.

One out of every four infected with chronic Hepatitis B will die of Hepatitis B related liver cancer or cirrhosis.

As many as 1 in 10 Asian Americans versus 1 in 1,000 Americans have chronic Hepatitis B. While one of the greatest disparities Asian Americans suffer is liver cancer, 80% of liver cancer in Asian Americans is caused by chronic Hepatitis B virus infection.