

Hepatitis B

What is it?

- Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver that is caused by a virus.
- The Hepatitis B virus can affect people in different ways. Most people who are infected with Hepatitis B do not get sick and have no symptoms. Some people get a mild illness; others can become very sick.
- If you do get symptoms, you may:
 - feel like you have the flu
 - have jaundice – yellowing of the skin and eyes
 - have darker urine
 - have lighter stool
 - have stomach pain
- Most people who get Hepatitis B recover completely. However, after the infection is finished some people are not able to rid their body of the virus. They continue to carry the virus in their body fluids for their entire life and may infect others. People who are “carriers” may develop liver problems later in life.

How is it spread?

Hepatitis B is spread from contact with the body fluids of an infected person. The virus is easy to catch – even a tiny amount of the virus can infect a person. Hepatitis B can be spread:

- from a woman to her baby, during pregnancy or birth
- from used needles for tattoos, body piercing, acupuncture or drugs
- by having unprotected sex with an infected partner (having many sex partners increases the risk of contact with Hepatitis B)
- from sharing toothbrushes, dental floss, razors, nail files or other items which could have tiny amounts of infected blood on them

Is there treatment for it?

- Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

What can be done to protect the spread of it?

- Get the Hepatitis B vaccine.
- Avoid contact with other people's body fluids.
- Practice safer sex. Use a condom. Safer sex may not completely protect a person from Hepatitis B.
- Do not share needles, syringes or other needle equipment.
- Have only a professional do your tattoo, or body and ear piercing. Never share any equipment used for tattoos and piercings.
- Do not share personal care items such as razors, dental floss or toothbrushes.

**Talk with your family doctor or nurse
if you share needles or have many sex partners.**

For more information

Go to the Public Health Agency of Canada website:

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hcai-iamss/bbp-pts/hepatitis/hep_b-eng.php

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

