



# Better2Know

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## Hepatitis B Fact Sheet

### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver, to which different patients have diverse responses. The virus is usually transmitted through contact with infected blood or body fluids. Only a tiny amount of blood is needed to transmit the virus because it is so infectious.

The Hepatitis B virus may also be present in saliva, vaginal secretions, breast milk and other bodily fluids. Infection commonly occurs through unprotected sexual intercourse, the sharing of contaminated needles by drugs users, accidental injury with a contaminated needle (if needles used for tattooing, body piercing or acupuncture are contaminated) and sharing razors.

### What are the symptoms (if any)?

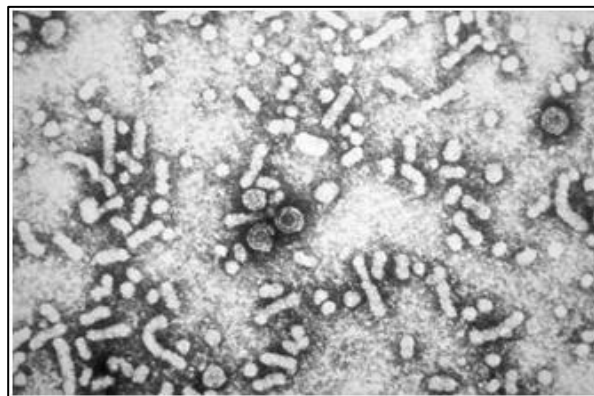
People with Hepatitis B often have no symptoms in the early stages. If symptoms are present, these may include feeling tired, aches, nausea, vomiting, passing darker urine than usual and/or being jaundiced.

### How is it treated?

The majority of people with Hepatitis B do not need specific treatment other than rest, and then they can eventually make a full recovery.

It is important that the infection is monitored to check whether chronic disease develops, and the person is given advice about the risk of passing the infection on.

If the infection lasts more than six months (chronic Hepatitis infection, where the virus continues to actively reproduce in the body) you may need more specific drug treatment such as antiviral medicines.



*Electron micrograph of Hepatitis B virions*

### What happens if you do not get treated?

The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause an acute illness that resolves itself quickly without causing long-term liver damage. However, in about 20% of cases it can cause a chronic illness that lasts more than six months, sometimes for life, with symptoms that come and go.

In 15-40% of those with chronic infection cirrhosis, liver cancer or liver failure develops, and so the infection may eventually be fatal. Left untreated, there is also an increased risk of getting other STIs, including HIV.

### Better2Know Testing Information

You should wait at least 10 days after any incident you are concerned about before getting tested for Hepatitis B.

Better2Know's standard Hepatitis B test uses a blood sample to test for Hepatitis B. Several different tests are available including tests to determine if you are infected, tests to see if you are immune to Hepatitis B and tests to determine if you have a chronic Hepatitis B infection.

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