

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It is much easier to get than HIV (AIDS). Hepatitis B cannot be cured. Sometimes the infection goes away by itself or sometimes people carry the virus for the rest of their lives and never know, but still give it to other people. A lot of people have hepatitis B without knowing it. It can cause serious problems later in life, including permanent liver disease

and cancer of the liver. It is the only sexually transmitted disease that can be prevented by a vaccine.

The symptoms and signs

Most people who become infected with hepatitis B have no symptoms. Symptoms usually occur within two to six months after contact.

They can include:

- poor appetite, nausea and vomiting
- headaches
- feeling very tired

- a general feeling of being unwell
- jaundice (yellow colouring of the eyes and skin).

How hepatitis B is spread

The hepatitis B virus is spread through infected body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluid.

It can also be passed from a mother to her baby during childbirth.

To lower your chances of getting hepatitis B, make sure you:

- use a latex condom each and every time you have sex
- do not share needles and syringes
- do not share instruments used in body-piercing, tattooing or hair removal
- do not share toothbrushes or razors
- get vaccinated.




If you ~~ha~~ve been infected, avoid having sex until your doctor says it's okay. If you are having sex (or if your

regular sex partner has had hepatitis B), get a hepatitis B vaccine from a doctor or public health clinic. In some provinces, free vaccinations are available to teenagers through the high schools and at STD clinics.

Remember, hepatitis B is *not always* an STD. You can get it other ways as well.



If you have any questions or problems about STDs, contact your local CLSC

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