



HEPATITIS B FACT SHEET

WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B can be a serious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. Acute Hepatitis B refers to a short-term infection that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is infected with the virus. Chronic Hepatitis B refers to a lifelong infection with the Hepatitis B virus. The likelihood that a person develops a chronic infection depends on the age at which someone becomes infected.

HOW DO YOU GET HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the Hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through:

- Sexual contact with an infected person
- Injection drug use
- An infected mother can pass the infection to her baby at birth

SYMPTOMS

Some people may not have any symptoms. If symptoms occur they may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain, and jaundice (yellow color in the skin or the eyes). On average, symptoms appear 90 days (or 3 months) after exposure, but they can appear any time between 6 weeks and 6 months after exposure.

TREATMENT

For those with acute Hepatitis B, doctors usually recommend rest, adequate nutrition, fluids, and close medical monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized. People living with chronic Hepatitis B should be evaluated for liver problems and monitored on a regular basis. Treatments are available that can slow down or prevent the effects of liver disease. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

The best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting the Hepatitis B vaccine. The Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective and is usually given as 3-4 shots over a 6-month period.

DPHD EFFORTS:

The Delaware Public Health District (DPHD) offers the Hepatitis B vaccine. Please call (740) 368-1700 to determine if you need the vaccine and to schedule an appointment. Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the DPHD. The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.