

Hepatitis B prevention

- Take the Hepatitis B vaccine. Such vaccine involves three injections over a set time period. This vaccine is given routinely to children as part of the free national schedule
- Do not share needles, spoons or snorting practices for drug use
- Do not share shaving razors, toothbrushes or other personal belongings that involve contact with infected blood
- Always use condoms for sexual encounters
- Attend licensed tattooing, acupuncture or body piercing parlours

Treatment for Hepatitis B

All infected persons are seen regularly by specialist physicians for physical examinations and blood testing even if no treatment is given.

The infected persons are advised to avoid alcohol intake and encouraged to eat a healthy diet and get plenty of rest.

Acute Hepatitis B: There is no treatment that can prevent acute Hepatitis B from becoming chronic. Treatment may be given to alleviate symptoms, if present.

Chronic Hepatitis B: Treatment does not cure Hepatitis B but works to delay/prevent complications. Interferon therapy is one of the treatments offered to Hepatitis B infected persons. Oral treatment can also be given. Pregnancy is to be avoided whilst on treatment.

Hepatitis B

Contact tracing

If you are infected with Hepatitis B, you should inform all your sexual partners, family members and people with whom you shared needles and drugs to get tested. If you do not want to inform your contacts yourself, a health professional can do it for you under strict confidentiality i.e. without mentioning your name.

Available help

- Family doctor (GP)
- Genitourinary clinic (GU clinic) on **21227 981**
- Detox Helpline on **2388 5301**
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate on **2326 6000**
- www.sexualhealth.gov.mt

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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR HEALTH



Hepatitis B Infection

Hepatitis B (HBV) is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. HBV is transmitted by blood and body secretions.

Acute Hepatitis: can last from a few weeks to a few months. Most people with an acute infection will fully recover and will not have any long term health problems.

Chronic Hepatitis: can last for the entire person's life. Such infection can lead to liver damage, liver failure, liver cancer and even death.

Signs and Symptoms of Hepatitis B Infection:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal Pain
- Dark urine
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (when the whites of the eyes turn yellow, the skin becomes yellow, the urine is darker and the faeces are pale).

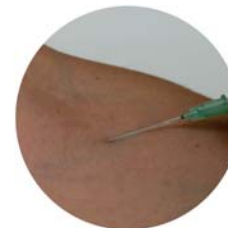
Incubation Period (the time period between exposure to the virus and when the signs and symptoms are first apparent): as early as 2 weeks but on average it is from 60 to 90 days. It may be as long as 6 to 9 months.

Diagnostic tests:

- Blood test (repeated according to incubation period)
- Liver function test
- Liver biopsy.

Hepatitis B is common amongst:

- People with injecting drug habits
- Persons having sex with multiple partners
- Men who have sex with men
- Foreigners from endemic areas
- Sex workers
- Prison inmates
- People with other Sexually Acquired Infections



How can you get infected with Hepatitis B?

- Sharing of used needles in drug abuse
- Having unprotected sex with an infected partner.
- Sharing shaving razors and toothbrushes of infected persons



- Coming into contact with a sufficient amount of infected blood. Such infected blood has to enter the body through a break in the skin
- Use of unsterilized equipment for tattooing, acupuncture, electrolysis or body piercing
- From infected mother to her newborn during delivery
- Needle stick injuries in health care settings
- Contaminated and inadequate sterilized equipment used in dental and medical procedures.



Hepatitis B cannot be transmitted through hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing of eating utensils or drinking glasses or breastfeeding.

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