

## **Hepatitis B: General Information**

### **Modes of Transmission**

The hepatitis B virus (HBV) is found in blood/body fluids, and can be spread by:

- Sharing injection drug or tattooing equipment
- Unprotected anal, vaginal or oral sex
- Infected mother to her infant during delivery
- Household contact of an infected person
- Occupational exposure through needle stick

### **Symptoms**

The incubation period for hepatitis B is six to 24 weeks, with an average of eight to 12 weeks.

#### ***Acute Hepatitis B***

Most children and many adults who contract hepatitis B usually have no symptoms, however, if present, symptoms are similar to hepatitis A:

- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Feeling very tired
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

#### ***Chronic Hepatitis B***

Chronic hepatitis B refers to an infection where the body is not able to eliminate the virus. About 90 percent of those infected by hepatitis B as children and 10 percent of those infected as adults will develop chronic hepatitis B, which may lead to cirrhosis and cancer of the liver.

### **Testing**

Tests commonly performed to diagnose hepatitis B include:

- HBsAg = Hepatitis B surface antigen
  - ❖ Indicates acute infection or a carrier of hepatitis B and infectious to others
- HBsAb = Hepatitis B surface antibody
  - ❖ Indicates immunity to hepatitis B from exposure to the virus or from vaccination
- Anti-HBc = Total Hepatitis B core antibody
  - ❖ Indicates that the person has or had hepatitis B. It does not develop after immunization with the hepatitis B vaccine

For a more in-depth look at lab interpretations for hepatitis B, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/pdfs/serologicchartv8.pdf>

## Vaccination

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for:

- Persons having unprotected sex—especially with multiple partners
- Inmates in long-term correctional facilities
- Persons with hepatitis C (HCV), HIV/AIDS, Diabetes or other chronic diseases
- All infants (since 1992)
- All 7<sup>th</sup> grade students (since 1997)
- In 1998 it became a requirement for kindergarten

## Treatment

There is no medication available to treat *acute* hepatitis B. During this short-term infection, doctors usually recommend rest, adequate nutrition and fluids. Some people may need to be hospitalized.

People with *chronic* hepatitis B virus infection should seek the care of a doctor who specializes in treating hepatitis B. Patients should be monitored regularly for signs of liver disease and evaluated for possible treatment. Several medications have been approved for hepatitis B treatment, and new drugs are in development. However, not every person with chronic hepatitis B needs to be on medication, and the drugs may cause side effects in some patients.

## Perinatal Hepatitis B

The Florida Perinatal Hepatitis B Prevention Program (PHBPP) is committed to the prevention of perinatal HBV infection. For more information, visit:

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/perinatal-hepatitis-b/index.html>

## References:

1. Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines 2015: MMWR 2015:64(No3)
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)
3. Immunization Action Coalition: <http://www.immunize.org>