

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Hepatitis B can cause a brief or short-lived infection, called “acute” hepatitis B, or it can stay in the body long-term, called “chronic” infection.

Symptoms

- Yellow eyes or skin
- Fatigue (feeling tired), muscle aches
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
- Dark colored urine (pee) and light colored stools (poop)
- 70% of people who had acute hepatitis B never felt sick or experienced any symptoms. Acute infection usually lasts for 6 months or less. Only about 6% of adults go on to develop chronic HBV.
- Most people with chronic HBV never get sick. Others develop liver scarring or cancer decades later.

Transmission

- HBV lives in human blood (remember this as “B for blood”) and bodily fluids (semen, vaginal fluid, etc.).
- People can get hepatitis B from getting hepatitis B infected blood or bodily fluids into the body, such as from having sex with someone who has HBV, sharing needles when injecting drugs or by getting stuck with a needle that has HBV on or in it, or sharing personal items that may have blood on them.
- Blood transfusions or kidney dialysis could also spread HBV. Blood donations in the United States have been accurately checked for HBV since 1992 so getting HBV this way is now unlikely.
- When babies are born to mothers infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV), 90% of them will develop chronic HBV infection unless the baby is given the vaccine within 12 hours after being born to protect it from getting HBV. If you are pregnant and have HBV, contact the health department for guidance.

Treatment

- To find out if you have – or have had – hepatitis B, a blood sample will be taken and analyzed. The test will show if you have chronic hepatitis B, or if you had acute hepatitis B in the past.
- Chronic hepatitis B can be treated with drugs that slow or stop the virus from damaging the liver. Since the virus only causes long term problems for about 25% of people, your health care provider will help you decide if you need treatment and which drug combination is likely to work for you.
- If you have chronic HBV, protect your liver by getting vaccinated against Hepatitis A, not drinking alcohol or using drugs, and not taking over-the-counter medications unless your doctor says it’s OK.

Prevention

- The number one way to prevent hepatitis B is to get vaccinated.
- Practice safer sex with the use of barriers during sex. Do not share needles or drug works with anyone.

Additional Information

Who should get hepatitis B vaccine?

- All babies and children 19 years of age or younger.
- Gay and bisexual men or anyone with more than one sex partner in a 6-month period.
- Illicit drug users (injection and non-injection).
- International travelers or families from areas where hepatitis B is common
- Health care and public safety workers with exposure to blood in the workplace.
- Persons with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis C.
- Household contacts and sexual partners of persons with hepatitis B.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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