

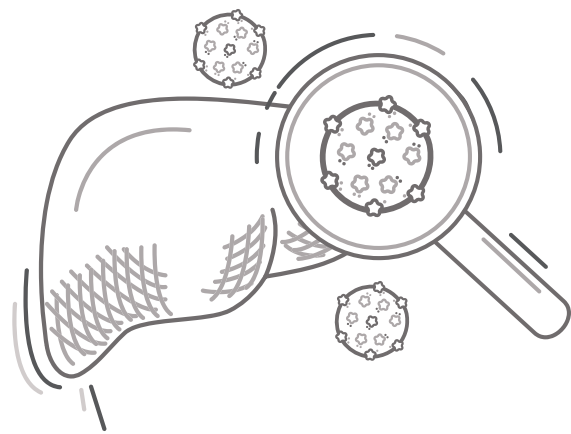
# HEPATITIS B BASICS



## WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is an infection in the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus. Over time, the virus causes liver injury and scarring and can make you very sick.

In Canada, many people have been vaccinated for hepatitis B. This means they are immune and cannot get hepatitis B.



## ABOUT THE LIVER

You can't live without your liver. It is a very important organ because it helps the body fight infections, break down toxins like alcohol and drugs, digest food, and more. An injured liver has a harder time doing these important functions.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HEPATITIS B?

**THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE HEPATITIS B IS TO GET TESTED**



You can have hepatitis B and not know it. Many people who have hepatitis B do not have symptoms for many years, even though the virus is injuring their liver.

Ask a healthcare provider for a hepatitis B test. You may want to also get tested for other infections at the same time, like hepatitis C, HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET HEPATITIS B?

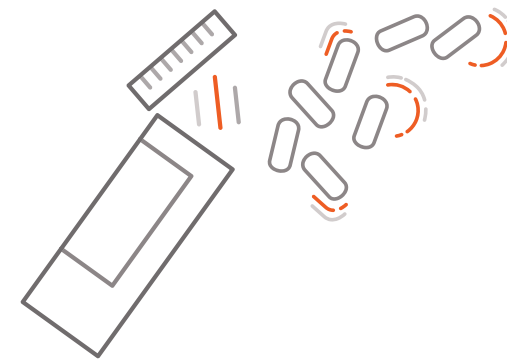
**WITH PROPER CARE, A PERSON WITH HEPATITIS B CAN LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE**



Most adults who get hepatitis B can clear the virus on their own without needing treatment. However, babies and children are less likely to clear the virus on their own. Once someone clears hepatitis B, they are immune. This means they can never get it again.

If the hepatitis B infection is not cleared within the first six months, the infection becomes chronic. With proper care, people with chronic hepatitis B can live long and healthy lives. There is treatment available to keep the virus under control.

**If you have chronic hepatitis B, speak to a healthcare provider about your care options.**

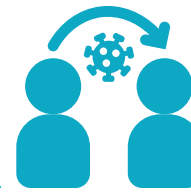


**Getting care for hepatitis B has many benefits:**

It can protect your liver from further damage. It lowers the chances of liver failure, liver cancer or death from liver disease. It also helps you get the right check-ups to monitor the health of your liver.

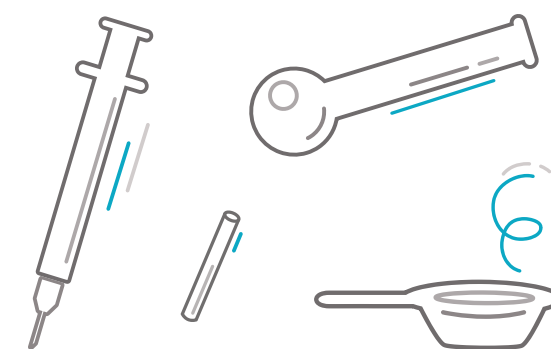
## HOW IS HEPATITIS B PASSED?

**HEPATITIS B IS PASSED THROUGH BODILY FLUIDS SUCH AS BLOOD, SEMEN OR VAGINAL FLUID**



Transmission happens when a person with hepatitis B passes the virus to another person through one of these bodily fluids. For people who are not immune (either from getting the vaccine or clearing the virus), there are many ways hepatitis B is passed, including the following:

- Condomless sex.
- Sharing equipment for using drugs, especially injection drug use equipment.





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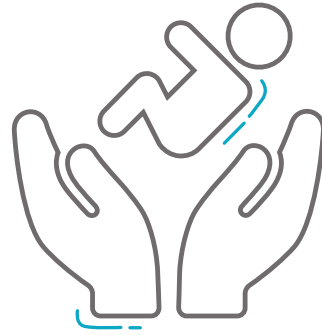
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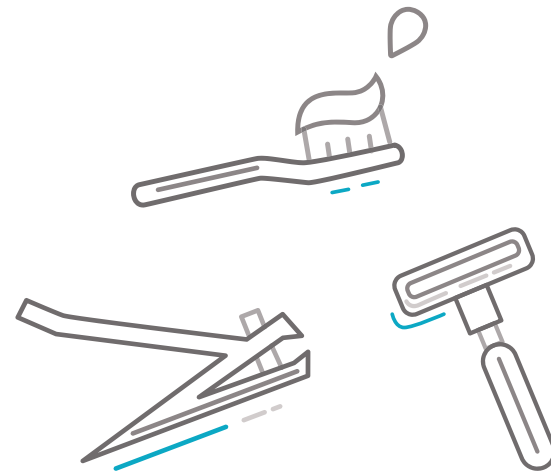
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- From a pregnant person with hepatitis B to a child during childbirth.



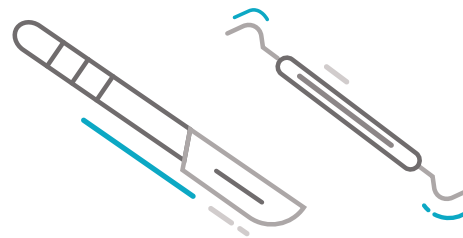
- Between household members through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids (for example, sharing personal care items such as toothbrushes, razors and nail clippers).



- Reusing tattooing or piercing equipment that was not sterilized properly.

### Hepatitis B can also be passed in these ways:

- Reusing medical equipment that was meant to be used only once, such as needles for vaccines or medicines, or medical equipment that was not sterilized properly before reuse. This is very rare in Canada but can happen in other countries.



- Receiving donated blood or tissue that was not tested for hepatitis B. In Canada, donated blood and tissue has been tested for hepatitis B since 1972. Hepatitis B may still be transmitted through donated blood or tissue in countries where the blood supply is not tested for hepatitis B.

### Hepatitis B cannot be passed by shaking hands, touching, hugging or sharing meals with someone who has the virus.

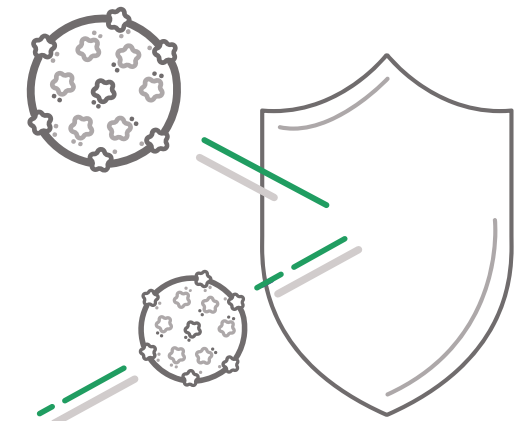
## HOW CAN HEPATITIS B BE PREVENTED?

### GETTING VACCINATED IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO PREVENT HEPATITIS B



#### There are many other effective ways to prevent hepatitis B:

- Use condoms the right way each time you have sex.
- Get tested for hepatitis B during pregnancy. People with hepatitis B can lower the risk of passing hepatitis B to their baby by taking effective treatment during pregnancy and ensuring their baby receives proper care, including vaccines at birth.



- If you use drugs, avoid sharing by using new equipment every time you inject and by using your own equipment every time you smoke or snort.
- If you may have recently been exposed to hepatitis B, ask a healthcare provider about PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). Ideally, you should start PEP for hepatitis B within 48 hours of exposure.



Visit [whereto.catie.ca](https://www.whereto.catie.ca) to find testing services near you:

