
▶ **What is hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus.

▶ **How do I get hepatitis B?**

You can get hepatitis B from contact with blood, semen, vaginal fluid and/or saliva of an infected person. This happens by:

- having sex with an infected partner (most common)
- sharing needles, syringes or other drug related equipment (such as cookers, cotton, pipes, straws, bills, etc.)
- sharing razors, toothbrushes, manicure or pedicure equipment (such as nail scissors)
- body piercing, tattooing, acupuncture or electrolysis equipment that may not have been properly sterilized
- needle stick or sharps injury
- breast feeding or during birth, if mother is infected

▶ **Who is most at risk of getting hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is common around the world, but most common in Asia and Africa.

High risk of getting hepatitis B if you:

- have unprotected sex with an infected person
- have unprotected sex with many partners
- already have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- use injection drugs and share drug equipment that is contaminated
- get a tattoo or piercing with unsterilized needles

Moderate risk of getting hepatitis B if you:

- live or travel in regions where hepatitis B is common
- are exposed to blood or body fluids

- get a bite wound with blood from an infected person
- have family members with hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is NOT passed from person to person by:

- coughing sneezing, kissing, hugging or other casual contact
- shaking hands or touching an infected person
- sharing food, drinks or eating utensils
- toilets seats

▶ **How can I tell if I have hepatitis B?**

A blood test can be done to confirm hepatitis B (if you have at least one risk factor (see above) or if you:

- were born in a region where hepatitis B is common
- live or travel to regions where hepatitis B is more common
- have family history of liver disease or liver cancer
- have been in prison
- are pregnant
- have HIV
- use injection drugs
- are on kidney dialysis
- use medication that suppresses the immune system
- have chronic hepatitis C



Additional information about hepatitis B:

- Many people who become infected with hepatitis B never feel sick and recover completely
- Some people have a brief illness and may lose their appetite, feel tired and have jaundice (skin and eyes turn yellow)
- A small percentage (5%) develop chronic hepatitis, which can lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver or liver cancer

- Often called the “silent disease” because there are often no symptoms until the liver is damaged severely

▶ **Who can I talk to if I have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

▶ **Resources**

[Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections \(2008\)](#)

[Public Health Agency Canada](#)

[Canadian Liver foundation](#)
<http://www.liver.ca/hepatitis/hepatitis-b.aspx>

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