

Hepatitis B/HBV

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What is it? Hepatitis B/HBV is a vaccine-preventable liver infection. It can be Acute (not long lasting) or Chronic (the person will have Hepatitis B for the rest of their life). Chronic Hepatitis B is treatable but not curable.

Approximately 90% of infants and 25%–50% of children aged 1–5 years who contract the disease will remain chronically infected with HBV. By contrast, only about 5% of adults become chronically infected.¹

Why is it important that people who use drugs get vaccinated for HBV? HBV is a bloodborne infection, so people who inject drugs and share syringes or works are at an increased risk of becoming infected with it. People aged 30–59 years of age are most at risk.²

Unlike Hepatitis C, there is a vaccine for Hepatitis B, so you can protect yourself by getting vaccinated.

Symptoms: Children with Acute HBV who are under 5 yrs of age and immunosuppressed adults are usually asymptomatic whereas 30–50% of people over 5 years show symptoms. Symptoms can include but are not limited to:

- fever
- fatigue
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- vomiting

- abdominal pain
- dark urine
- clay-colored stool
- joint pain
- jaundice³

Most people with chronic infection are asymptomatic, or don't show symptoms. Many do not show signs until cirrhosis of the liver kicks in. Some people with chronic infection do develop cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Transmission: HBV can live outside the body and be infectious for up to 7 days.⁴

HBV is passed by having contact with blood, semen, or other bodily fluids of someone who has the Hepatitis B Virus. Transmission requires percutaneous (puncture through the skin) or submucosal (during childbirth) contact with the bodily fluids.

Routes of transmission can include but are not limited to:

- sex with a partner who has HBV infection;
- injection drug use that involves sharing needles, syringes, or drug-preparation equipment;
- A birthing person who has HBV infection and passes it on to their child; ;
- contact with blood or open sores of a person who has HBV infection;

¹ CDC. (2021, 10 12). *Hepatitis B - FAQs, Statistics, Data, & Guidelines* | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm>

² *Hepatitis B Basics*. (2022, November 30). HHS.gov. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.hhs.gov/hepatitis/learn-about-viral-hepatitis/hepatitis-b-basics/index.html>

³ *Hepatitis B Questions and Answers for Health Professionals* | CDC. (2022, March 30). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/hbvfaq.htm#treatment>

⁴ CDC. (2022, March 30). *What is Hepatitis B - FAQ* | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 23, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm>

- exposures to needle sticks or sharp instruments; and
- sharing certain items that can break the skin or mucous membranes with a person who has HBV infection (e.g. razors, toothbrushes, and glucose monitoring equipment), potentially resulting in exposure to blood.⁵

- The schedule for the 2 dose vaccine is to get dose 2 at least 1 month after dose 1.⁷

Where can I go to get tested for or vaccinated against Hep B? If you have no insurance there are federal health centers that can help with vaccinations. You can find a list of them here:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/active-317-a-dult-provider-sites.shtml>

If you need assistance with or have questions about getting vaccinated or getting help with linkage to care please reach out to:

MAP's Director of Health Services,
Anna McConnell
call/text/signal 207-319-8079

Screening for HBV: The CDC advises that the following groups be vaccinated for the Hepatitis B Virus:

- All Newborns (within 24 hours of birth)
- All Children and Teens aged 0-18
- All Adults through age 59 with or without risk factors
- All Adults over 60 years if they have risk factors.⁶

Vaccination Schedules:

- Adults can receive either a 3 dose or 2 dose vaccine in the U.S.
- The 3 dose vaccines available to adults are: Enegrix-B, Recombivax HB, or Prehevbrio. These vaccines are all available to children except the Prehevbrio Vaccine. Prohevbrio like the 2 dose vaccine is only approved for adults >18.
 - The schedule for these vaccines is to get dose 2 at least 1 month after dose 1 and to get dose 3 at least 6 months after dose 2.
 - There is also a combination Hep A/Hep B vaccine called Twinrix that follows this same schedule
- There is also a 2 dose vaccine that is only available to adults under the brand name Heplisav B.

Other Information About Local Vaccine Access:

- ★ All adult vaccinations are available at Hannaford pharmacies without a prescription from a provider (Tetanus, MMR, HPV, Hep. A, Hep. B, Shingles, Pneumonia, Flu).
- ★ Only Flu vaccinations are available at Walgreens pharmacies without a prescription from a provider.
- ★ All pharmacies accept Mainecare, and the cost of vaccines may vary with other insurances.
- ★ Access to vaccinations at pharmacies may differ depending on location and it may be helpful to call ahead.

⁵ CDC. (2022, March 30). *What is Hepatitis B - FAQ* | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm>

⁶ *Hepatitis B Facts: Testing and Vaccination*. (2022, April 01). Hepatitis B Facts: Testing and Vaccination. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2110.pdf>

⁷ *Hepatitis B Vaccine Schedules*. (2022, September 01). Hepatitis B Foundation. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.hepb.org/prevention-and-diagnosis/vaccination/guidelines-2/>

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