



Facts at a Glance

Hepatitis B

- Hepatitis B is one of five known viruses that cause inflammation of the liver (the others are A, C, D, and E).
- Hepatitis B virus is spread by contact with body fluids of an infected person. These body fluids include blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and saliva.
- The hepatitis B virus is 100 times more infectious than HIV.
- Hepatitis B is more common among Asian Americans than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S. As many as 1 in 10 Asian Americans has hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis B can be transmitted from mother to child during childbirth.
- The only way hepatitis B can be positively identified is through a blood test.
- Most hepatitis B infections are short-term, or acute, and do not cause lasting health problems.
- If hepatitis B persists as a long-term, or chronic, condition it can lead to severe liver damage, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver cancer and death. It is estimated that there are 1.4 million Americans with chronic hepatitis B.
- People who are unable to clear the hepatitis B infection from their bodies in six months are chronically infected with hepatitis B.
- About 5 percent of adults infected with hepatitis B develop the chronic infection. Up to 90 percent of those infected at birth develop chronic hepatitis B.
- There are approximately 80,000 new cases of hepatitis B infection each year in the United States.
- Once someone has recovered from hepatitis B, they will never get hepatitis B again; however, blood tests will always show that they were once infected, and blood centers will not accept donated blood from these individuals.
- There is no known cure for hepatitis B; however there is a vaccine to prevent infection. Vaccination is recommended for all infants and children as well as adults at risk for infection.
- The most common symptoms of hepatitis B are often mild and may include fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, headache, muscle soreness, pain near the liver and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)..