

HELP

HOW TO TELL OTHERS
THAT YOU HAVE
CHRONIC HEPATITIS B



Table of Contents

Living with Chronic Hepatitis B	1
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Telling Others

Why Should I Tell?	2
Whom Should I Tell?	2
What If I Don't Know When I Got Hep B?	3
How Should I Tell People?	3
What Should I Say?	3
How Will People React?	4

Children

Should I Tell My Children I Have Hep B?	5
What If My <i>Child</i> Has Hep B?	5

Prevent Spreading Hep B to Others

Sex	6
At Home	6
Drug Use	6
Other Needle Use	6
You Cannot Spread Hep B By	6

Resources

Hep B Testing	7
Hep B Vaccination	7
Medical Care and Insurance	7
Support Groups	8
Additional Information	8

LIVING WITH CHRONIC HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. There are two kinds of hepatitis B (called Hep B). The **acute** form is the initial infection. Most people recover fully from this infection and can never get it again. In the **chronic** form, the virus stays in your body and can continue to cause problems.

If you have chronic (long-term) Hep B, you are not alone—about 1.25 million people in the United States also have it.

Most people with Hep B feel healthy their entire lives. But some people develop problems such as liver damage, liver failure or liver cancer. You can reduce the risk of these problems by following these guidelines:

- **Do not drink alcohol.**
- **Eat a healthy diet.**
- **Get plenty of rest and exercise.**
- **Get the right medical care.**

Find a doctor with experience treating people with Hep B. Even if you do not have any symptoms, get regular check-ups and talk to your doctor about your treatment.

- **Talk about your feelings.** Finding out that you have Hep B can be hard. You may feel scared, sad, angry, confused or upset. Tell your doctor or someone close to you about how you feel, or join a support group.

Hep B can spread through infected blood and body fluids, for example:

- By having unprotected sex (sex without using a condom)
- By sharing needles (for drug use, tattooing, steroid injection, acupuncture, etc.)
- During birth (a mother with Hep B can pass it to her newborn)

For more information on this topic, please read the booklet, "Hep B: The Facts," available at: nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdhepb-the-facts.shtml



TELLING OTHERS

Why should I tell?

There are many good reasons to tell people you have Hep B—it can help both you and them. The main reasons to talk about Hep B are:

Support. Talking to someone you trust can help you deal with your feelings and get the support you need.

Prevention. If you let your sex partners and household members know you have Hep B, they can get tested to see if they have it, and if not, they can get vaccinated so they don't get it.

Whom should I tell?

Think about when you might have gotten infected. Tell the people you've had close contact with since you got infected, as well as people you will have close contact with in the future, including:

- Sex partners
- Needle-sharing partners
- People in your household

You do not have to tell everyone. It's okay to take your time when deciding whom to tell and what to say.

Tell your health care providers if they don't already know that you have Hep B.





Take some brochures with you to give your contacts for additional information on Hep B. See page 7 and 8 for resources.

How will people react?

People may react in different ways. They may be supportive and concerned about you, or may be angry if they think you exposed them to Hep B. Or they may simply have questions.

If you know someone is violent or you are not sure about the reaction you'll get, be very careful. Talk first with your doctor or a counselor about how to have the conversation. You may decide to have a family member, a friend or a professional with you when you tell the person.

CHILDREN

Children

Should I tell my children I have Hep B?

If you are a woman with Hep B, your children need to be tested to find out if they have the virus. If they don't have the virus, they need to be vaccinated against Hep B.

Talk with your children if they are old enough to understand what having Hep B means. You can give more details as your child grows up and becomes more mature. Keep the conversation simple and be direct. Say, for example:

"I have something important to tell you—I have an infection that affects my liver. I need to see the doctor to make sure I'm okay."

What if my child has Hep B?

If your child has Hep B, talk to your pediatrician about how and when to talk about it.

You don't have to tell teachers, daycare providers, babysitters, sports coaches, other children or their parents that your child has Hep B.



PREVENT SPREADING HEP B TO OTHERS

Prevent Spreading

Sex

Use condoms until your sex partners are completely vaccinated with three Hep B shots. Continue using condoms to avoid getting or spreading other sexually transmitted diseases unless you are in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship.

At home

Tell household members that they can get infected by coming in contact with your blood. Do not share items such as toothbrushes, razors, clippers, syringes or glucometers.

Drug use

Never share drugs or injection drug use equipment such as needles, syringes, cotton, ties or cookers. Do not share cups or water for preparing drugs.

Never share straws for sniffing or snorting drugs.

Other needle use

Never share needles for tattooing, acupuncture or injection (insulin, steroids, etc.).

Be sure your sex partners, household members and people you use drugs or needles with get tested. If they are not infected, they need to get vaccinated so they don't get Hep B.

You cannot spread Hep B by...

- Sneezing or coughing
- Kissing or hugging
- Sharing drinking glasses or eating utensils
- Preparing food for others
- Eating a meal together
- Breastfeeding

You should not be kept out of work or school because you have Hep B.

RESOURCES

Hep B Testing

Sex partners, needle sharing partners, and people in your household should get 2 tests:

- Hep B surface antigen (HBsAg) test
- Hep B surface antibody (anti-HBs) test

What the tests mean:

Results		Interpretation
Hep B surface antigen (HBsAg)	Hep B surface antibody (anti-HBs)	
Positive	Negative	Hep B infection
Negative	Positive	Immune
Negative	Negative	Need vaccination; susceptible
Positive	Positive	Unusual result. Discuss with your doctor; get tested again

Your regular doctor or health care provider can order these tests. If you do not have a health care provider, call 311 to find out where to get tested.

Hep B Vaccination

If you know people who need to be vaccinated, talk to a health care provider or call 311.

Medical Care and Insurance

Call 311 to find out about free or low-cost insurance.

Family Health Plus

(877) 934-7587 • www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/fhplus/index.htm

Healthy NY

(866) 432-5849 • healthyny.com

Support Groups

For Support Group locations in New York City (for Hep B and Hep C), visit: <http://sites.google.com/site/nyhepatistaskforce/hcv-support-groups> or call 311.

Additional Information

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

For general information on Hep B for people living with chronic hepatitis B, visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdhepb-the-facts.shtml> (Available in several languages.)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

cdc.gov/hepatitis

LIFENET

If you feel depressed, or have a problem with drugs or alcohol, call 1-800-LIFENET (800) 543-3638 24 hours/7 days for help

- In Spanish: 1-877-AYUDESE (877-298-3373)
- In Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean: 877-990-8585
- All other languages: 1-800-LIFENET (800-543-3638)

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Call 311 to order free copies of this booklet