

Give this information to your healthcare provider.

Dear Healthcare Provider:

Your patient is in a high-risk group for hepatitis B virus infection. Please consider testing and vaccinating your patient against hepatitis B.

You may use the following testing strategies to assess a patient's hepatitis B status:

- hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) &
 - hepatitis B core antibody (anti-HBc)
- or
- hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) &
 - hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs)
- or
- hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) &
 - hepatitis B core antibody (anti-HBc) &
 - hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs)

Please give your patient a copy of the hepatitis B test results, as well as a vaccination record card.

People at risk for hepatitis B virus infection are from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Pacific Islands, Middle East, the Amazon Basin, the former Soviet Union, and rural Alaska.

As you know, hepatitis B can lead to liver failure, liver cancer, and death.

If you would like additional information from the Immunization Action Coalition, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Wexler, MD

Deborah L. Wexler, MD
Executive Director, Immunization Action Coalition
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To find out your hepatitis B status, bring this
brochure to your healthcare provider
and ask to have your blood tested.

Immunization Action Coalition

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www.vaccineinformation.org

IAC encourages you to make and distribute copies of this brochure. If you alter it, please acknowledge that it was adapted from the Immunization Action Coalition. The technical content of this brochure was reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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If you, your parents, or your children were born in any of these places . . .

Afghanistan, Africa, rural Alaska, Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Eastern Europe, Haiti, Hawaii, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, the Middle East, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Pacific Islands, Philippines, Romania, the former Soviet Union, South America's Amazon Basin, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, or Vietnam



. . . give this brochure to
your healthcare provider
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What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by a virus. This virus can enter the bloodstream and attack the liver. Hepatitis B is more common in people who live in or were born in areas of the world that are listed on the front of this brochure. If someone you know is infected with the hepatitis B virus, he or she has an increased risk of developing liver failure or liver cancer.

How do you know if you have hepatitis B?

It is important to know if you are infected with hepatitis B virus. Millions of people around the world are infected with this virus. Many people have no symptoms, but severe liver disease may occur after several years of silent infection. The only way to know your hepatitis B status is to have your blood tested. These blood tests will tell you that your hepatitis B status is one of the following:

Susceptible: If you are susceptible to hepatitis B, this means you have never had the disease and were never vaccinated. You could get infected in the future. If you are susceptible you should be vaccinated to protect yourself against hepatitis B.

Immune: If you are immune to hepatitis B virus infection, you had it in the past or you were previously vaccinated. You are safe from hepatitis B.

Chronically infected: If you are chronically infected with hepatitis B virus, you carry the virus in your blood. You usually do not feel sick, but you can pass the infection on to other people. You need to be under the care of a physician and be checked regularly for the development of serious liver problems.

How do you get hepatitis B?

Lots of ways. Hepatitis B virus is passed by contact with infected blood or body fluids. Some of the more common ways of becoming infected with hepatitis B virus include

- passing the virus from mother to baby at birth
- having sex with an infected person
- coming in contact with an infected person's blood
- sharing toothbrushes or razors
- pre-chewing food for babies
- biting
- using unsterilized needles for ear-piercing, injecting drugs, acupuncture, or tattooing
- living with a person who has chronic hepatitis B virus infection

Hepatitis B is not spread by sneezing, coughing, or by holding hands.

Is there a cure for hepatitis B?

There is no “cure” for hepatitis B. If a person has hepatitis B-related liver disease, certain medications can help. At times, these medications can cause side effects. Medications are only used when a person's liver tests show abnormalities. The majority of people who are chronically infected with hepatitis B do not need medication and will lead normal, healthy lives.

If you are chronically infected with hepatitis B virus, you should consult your physician once or twice a year for physical exams and blood tests to monitor your liver function, as well as to obtain screening for early detection of liver cancer.

People who are chronically infected with hepatitis B should avoid alcohol and make sure all their household members and sex partners are tested for hepatitis B and if found susceptible, vaccinated.

Researchers continue to look for more treatments and cures for people infected with hepatitis B virus.

Where can I go for hepatitis B testing and vaccination?

Consult your healthcare provider. If you are uninsured or your insurance doesn't cover testing or vaccination, your family may qualify for free testing and vaccination through your city or county health department. Call your local health department for more information.

If you are susceptible to hepatitis B, a series of vaccinations will protect you!
