



HEPATITIS B INFORMATION SHEET (HBsAg)

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The virus, which is called hepatitis B virus (HBV), can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death.

What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis B?

Sometimes a person with HBV infection has no symptoms at all. If you have symptoms, they might include:

- Yellow skin or yellowing of the whites of your eyes (jaundice)
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abdominal discomfort
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain

How is hepatitis B spread?

HBV is spread when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected.

- Having sex with an infected person without using a condom
- Sharing drugs, needles, or "works" when "shooting" drugs
- Needlesticks or sharps exposures on the job
- Maternal-newborn exposure

HBV is not spread through food, water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing, or by casual contact.

What are the risk factors for hepatitis B?

You are at increased risk of HBV infection if you:

- Have sex with someone infected with HBV
- Have sex with more than one partner
- Shoot drugs (Are an injection drug user)
- Are a man and have sex with a man
- Live in the same house with someone who has chronic (long-term) HBV infection
- Are a client in a home for the developmentally disabled
- Have hemophilia
- Are an infant born to an infected mother
- Are a health care or public safety worker
- Are a kidney dialysis patient

Can hepatitis B be treated and prevented?

There are no medications available for recently acquired (acute) HBV infection. Hepatitis B vaccine is available for the prevention of HBV infection. This is strongly recommended for those who live with persons who are infected with HBV. There are antiviral drugs available for the treatment of chronic HBV infection.

How is blood tested for hepatitis B?

All donated blood is tested for HBV before it is transfused to a patient. A sample of the donor's blood is tested using two screening tests. One detects the HBV surface antigen (HBsAg) and one detects antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen (anti-HBc). All blood from donors who test repeatedly reactive (positive) on either screening test is destroyed and is NOT used for



transfusion. Confirmatory testing is performed on HBsAg reactive donations to determine true infection. For the purposes of counseling, further confirmatory tests may be performed. If the screening and confirmatory tests for HBsAg are positive, a donor is considered infected with HBV and is permanently deferred from donating blood.

Should a person with a positive HBsAg test result donate blood?

NO. Studies show that the Hepatitis B virus can be transmitted through blood transfusion. Those with confirmed positive HBsAg test results are permanently disqualified from donating blood to others. Those with positive screening, but negative confirmatory tests (false-positive) may be eligible for reentry.

What is meant by a false-positive test result?

A false-positive test result means that the initial screening test was reactive, but a more precise supplemental test was negative. Almost all false-positive test results occur because of interference with the test and are not due to infection. Receiving a false-positive test result can be worrisome and upsetting, but tests that are false-positive really mean that infection is not present in the blood. Therefore, you would not have exposed your partner, children and friends to any tested infection or disease. If you have any additional concerns, you may speak to your physician who can give you medical advice. Repeat testing may also be discussed with your doctor.

What should I do if I am infected with hepatitis B?

Donors who have **positive** hepatitis B confirmatory tests should take several steps to protect their health and the health of others.

- DO** call the Donor Counselor at 1-800-289-4923 if you have questions and concerns.
- DO** see a doctor promptly for medical evaluation, even if you do not feel sick, and obtain follow-up testing, additional information and advice on treatment considerations.
- DO** inform your doctor or dentist about your test result before having treatment.
- DO** discuss any medications you take with your physician regarding their effect on the liver. This includes over-the-counter drugs.
- DO** limit or abstain from drinking alcohol.
- DO** engage in a lifestyle of nutritious diet and regular exercise.
- DO** practice safe sex by using condoms and spermicides.
- DO** practice good hygiene such as washing your hands regularly and avoid preparing food for others if you have open sores on your hands.
- DO NOT** donate blood, plasma, semen, bone marrow, or organs.
- DO NOT** share intravenous drugs, needles or syringes.
- DO NOT** share personal items that can puncture the skin and become contaminated with your blood such as toothbrushes, nail files, scissors, or shaving instruments.
- DO NOT** share food, drinks, and other items that may be contaminated with blood.

In addition, there is information and support available to help you understand the disease and how to live with it. You may consider joining a support group for people with hepatitis B infection. Support groups can help people cope with being hepatitis B infected. Here are some resources:

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| www.cdc.gov/hepatitis | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hepatitis web site |
| www.hepb.org | Hepatitis B Foundation |
| www.hepclinics.com | Hepatitis Clinics |
| www.liverfoundation.org | American Liver Foundation |