



Supported by



The hepatitis B story



Information in plain English

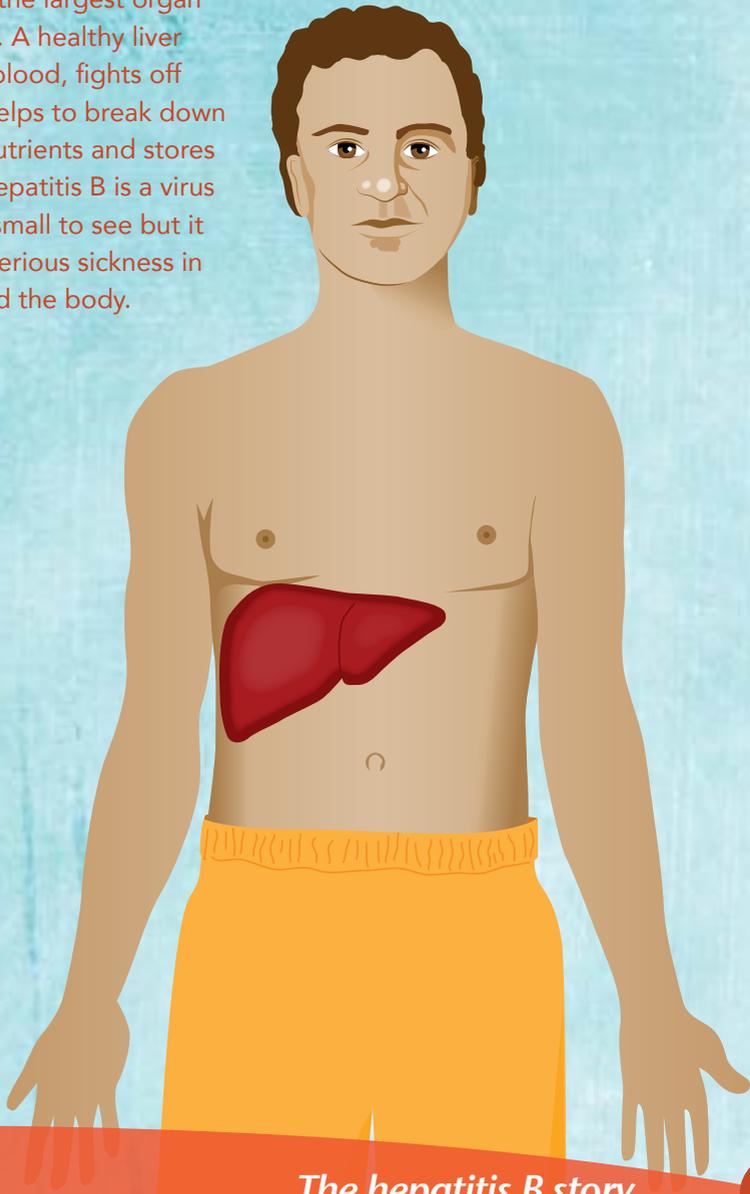
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This book is available online and as online videos in several languages. Go to St Vincent's website at www.svha.org.au/gp/clinics/Pages/gastroenterology.aspx

What is the liver and hepatitis B?

The liver is the largest organ in the body. A healthy liver cleans the blood, fights off infection, helps to break down food and nutrients and stores vitamins. Hepatitis B is a virus that is too small to see but it can cause serious sickness in the liver and the body.



How does hepatitis B affect you?

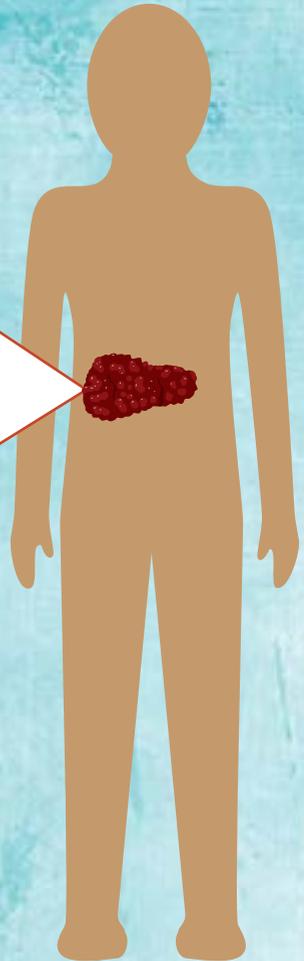
The hepatitis B virus can make the liver inflamed and scarred and then the liver cannot do its job to keep you healthy. Most people with hepatitis B do not feel sick until the disease is very advanced. They have no symptoms. People may start to feel sick, tired, have pain or fever when the liver is very inflamed and scarred.

Most people get hepatitis B as a baby or young child and they have the virus for life. This is called 'chronic' hepatitis B. The virus can 'sleep' and cause no real health problems for a long time. But the virus can 'wake up' in some people and make them very sick.

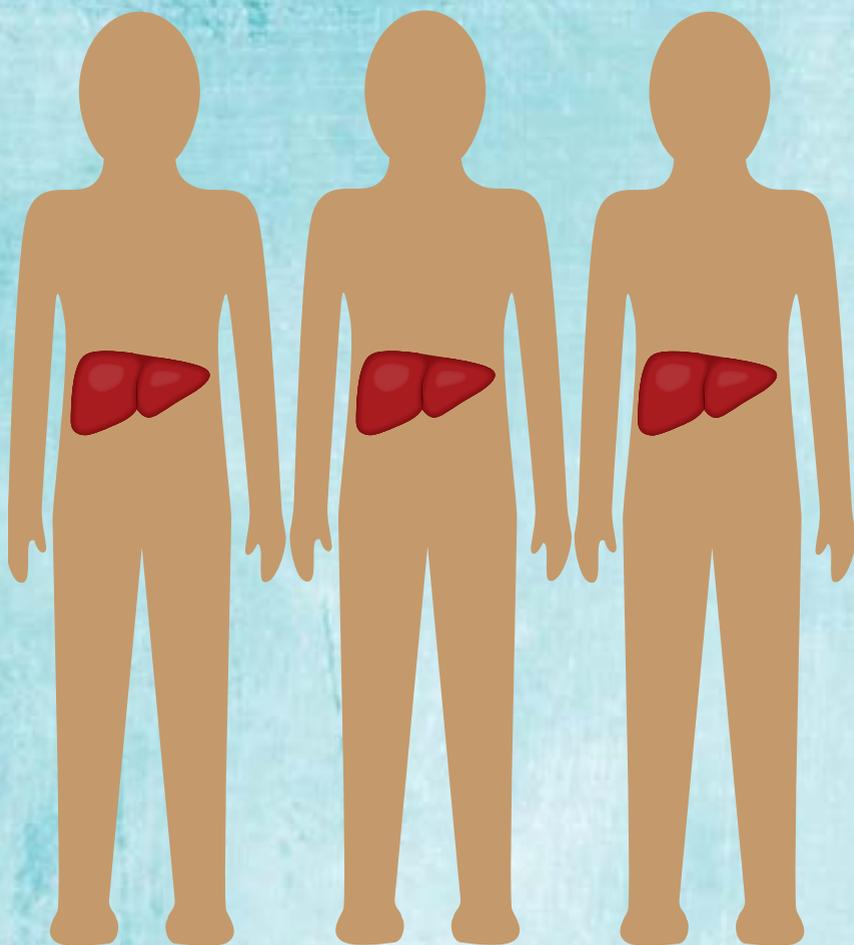
Of every four people who have chronic hepatitis B one will get liver scarring (known as cirrhosis), liver cancer or liver failure and become very sick if they do not get treatment. **A check-up at the doctor every 6 months** will help to prevent this.

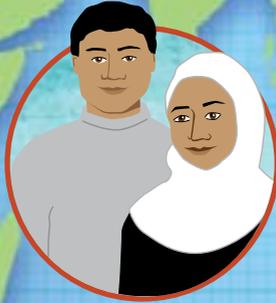
FOUR PEOPLE

Sick liver



LIVING WITH CHRONIC HEPATITIS B





Who has chronic hepatitis B?

Many countries have large numbers of people who live with chronic hepatitis B.

Men and women born in:

- Asia
 - The Pacific Islands
 - Africa
 - The Caribbean
 - Southern Europe
 - The Middle East
- are more likely to live with hepatitis B.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also have high rates of hepatitis B.

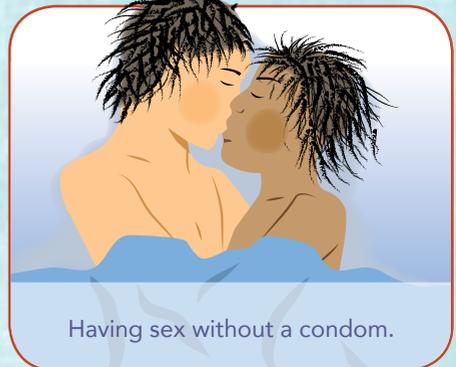
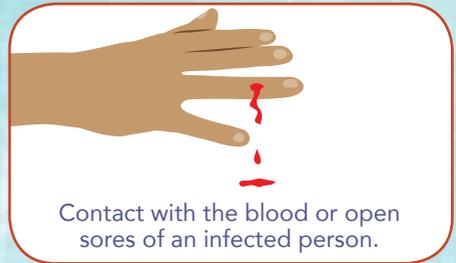
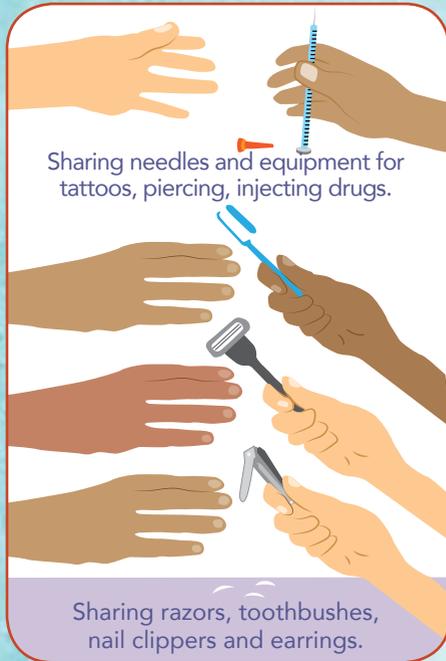
Hepatitis B is often found in several people in the same family. Most people get hepatitis B when they are a baby or young child. If you have hepatitis B it is important that your brothers, sisters, parents, partner and children are tested to see if they have hepatitis B.

How do you get hepatitis B?

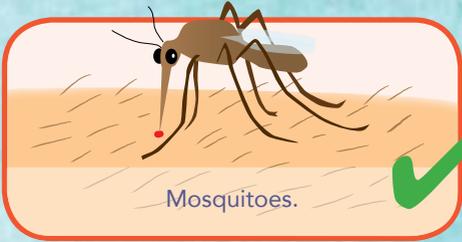
The hepatitis B virus is carried in the blood and sexual fluids. Most people get hepatitis B when they are born or very young. Babies can get hepatitis B at birth if their mother has hepatitis B. If we know the mother has hepatitis B, check-ups and medicines during pregnancy can protect the new born baby from getting the virus.



You may also get it from someone who has hepatitis B by:



You DO NOT get hepatitis B from:

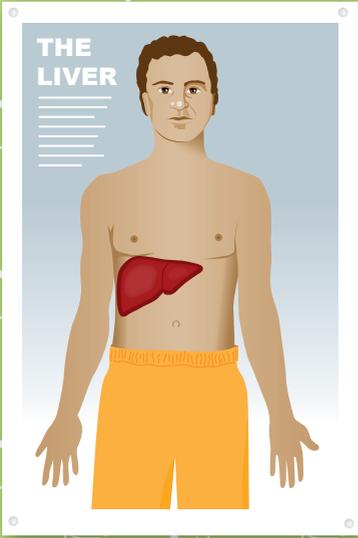


Tests to check for hepatitis B?

Of every two people who have chronic hepatitis B, one does not know they have it. Ask your doctor or nurse for a simple hepatitis B blood test to check. The results of the test will come back to the doctor in 2 weeks. This test will show:

- If you have chronic hepatitis B,
- if you are protected because you had the hepatitis B vaccinations or,
- If you need to have hepatitis B vaccinations.



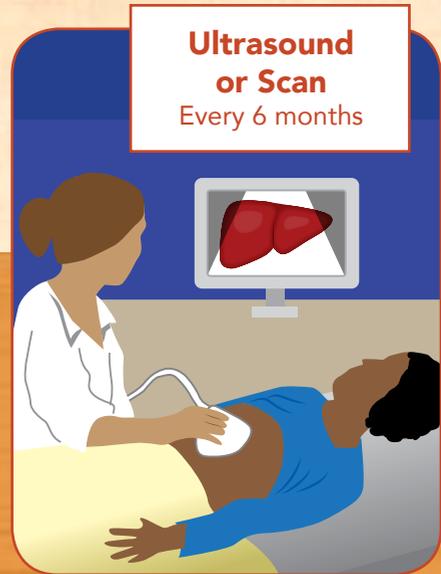
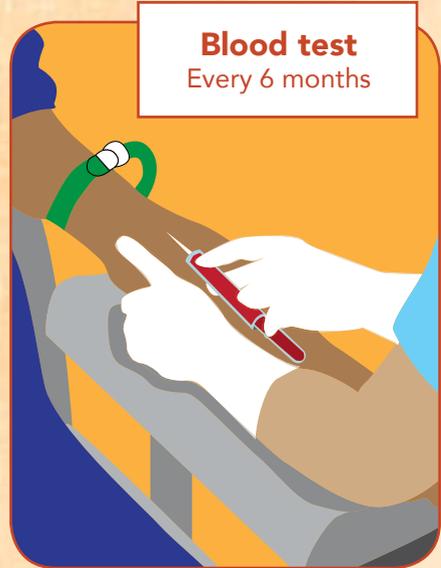


CLINIC



Check-ups

The hepatitis B virus in your liver changes over time. **Check-ups every 6 months** are very important and tell the doctor about any damage in your liver. This means having a *blood test* and maybe an *ultrasound* or scan. The test results will tell the doctor if you need to start taking medicine. Most people with chronic hepatitis B do not need to take tablets as the virus is 'sleeping' and is not causing damage to the liver. The doctor may ask you to see a special hepatitis doctor.



Treatment and medicine



You may need to take tablets in the future if the virus 'wakes up' and starts to damage your liver. You will need to take these tablets every day to help prevent liver damage and liver cancer. This medicine does not cure hepatitis B and it will not make the virus go away. But it does help to reduce damage to your liver and liver cancer. It helps to keep the virus under control. **It is important to continue to have regular check-ups.**

Stay healthy and well

These things help you to be healthy

- Eat a variety of foods. Eat more fruit, vegetables, rice, grains, nuts, fish and tofu.
- Be a healthy body weight
- Exercise and keep active. Try walking with family and friends. Try football, dancing or tai chi.
- Get a check-up at the doctor every 6 months
- Get vaccination for hepatitis A
- Avoid drinking alcohol and taking drugs.
- Stop smoking cigarettes.
- Don't eat much take-away food, chips, sweets, processed meats, cakes or sweet drinks.

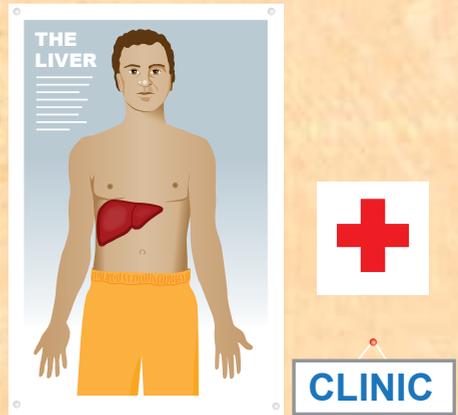




Having a baby

All new born babies in Australia are offered a free course of four hepatitis B vaccinations. These injections usually stop children from getting hepatitis B.

If a pregnant woman has hepatitis B she needs to have special check-ups. She may need to take medicine in the last months of pregnancy to stop the baby getting the virus during the birth. The babies of mothers living with chronic hepatitis B are offered an extra injection soon after birth. This will stop most babies from getting the hepatitis B virus. The mother and the baby then need to have regular check-ups for many years.





Caring for your family: *Preventing hepatitis B*

Hepatitis B vaccination is the best way for your family and those close to you to be protected against hepatitis B. Remember that hepatitis B is often found in several people in the same family. If you have chronic hepatitis B it is important that your brothers, sisters, parents, wife, husband, sexual partner and children are tested to find out if they have hepatitis B.

If they have not got hepatitis B they can get a free course of hepatitis B vaccination. It is important to check that family members sharing a house with you know about the vaccination to protect them.

REMEMBER TO TAKE CARE

Vaccination is the best way for your family and those close to you to be protected against hepatitis B.



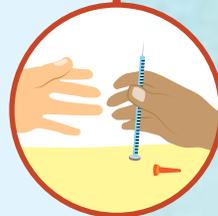
Clean up blood,
cover open sores.



Do not share razors,
toothbrushes, nail
clippers or earrings.



Do not share needles
and equipment for
tattoos, piercing
or injecting drugs



Use condoms when
having sex with a
new partner or person
who is not vaccinated.





Living with chronic hepatitis B: *What does it mean for you?*

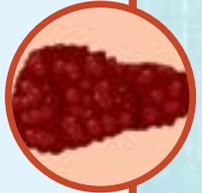
Some people want to tell friends and family they have chronic hepatitis B. Other people may feel shame and worry - they do not want to talk about hepatitis B. It can be helpful to talk to people who understand you. Take time to decide who you can trust. It is important to think about telling the people in your house and your sexual partners so they can be tested and get a vaccination. It may be helpful to talk about this with your nurse or doctor.



REMEMBER

Vaccination can protect people so they don't get hepatitis B.

Chronic hepatitis B can cause liver disease and liver cancer.



Ask your doctor for a blood test to check if you have hepatitis B.

Treatment for hepatitis B reduces the chance of liver damage and cancer.

Medicines work well and are easy to take.

Get a check-up at the doctor every 6 months if you have chronic hepatitis B.





Where to get help and more information?

Your Community Health Centre

Your doctor, GP or clinic nurse

Hep B Help website

For patients and clinicians

Web: www.hepbhelp.org.au

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

For patients and clinicians

Phone: 1800 032 017

Web: www.mshc.org.au

Cancer Council Helpline

Interpreters available

Phone: 13 11 20

Nutrition Australia

Web: www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resources

Multicultural Health & Support Service (MHSS)

Working with refugee and migrant communities in the area of sexual health and viral hepatitis.

Phone: 9418 9929

Web: www.ceh.org.au

Hepatitis Victoria

Hepatitis Infoline and support

Phone: 1800 703 003

Web: www.hepvic.org.au

Direct Line

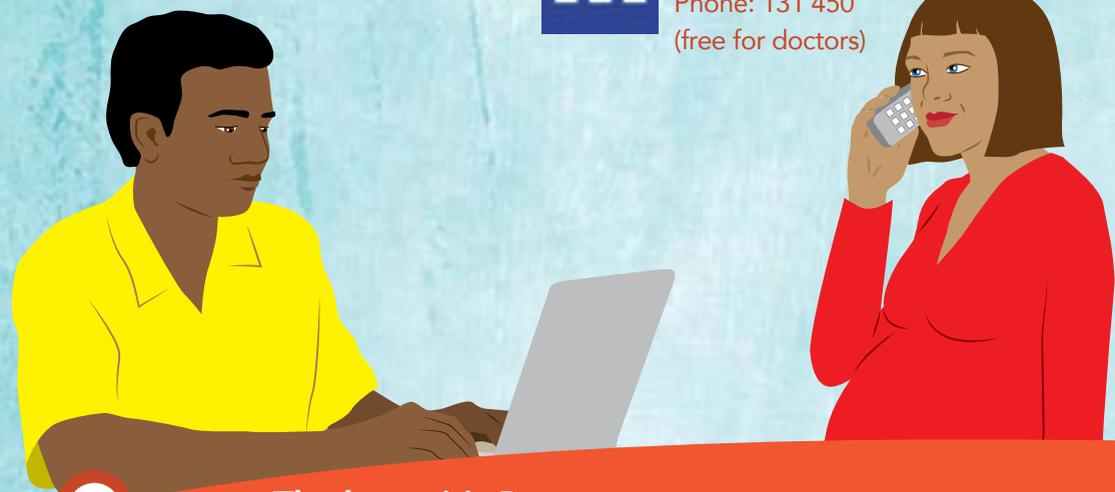
Information on needle syringe services, drug and alcohol counselling.

Phone: 1800 888 236



Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

Phone: 131 450
(free for doctors)



Acknowledgements

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This book is available online and as online videos in several languages.

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