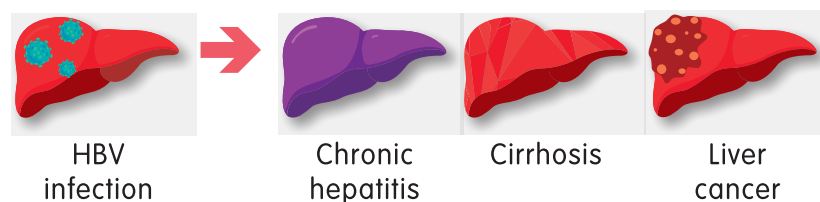


# What you need to know about hepatitis B

## What is hepatitis B?

- 🍷 Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection.
- 🍷 Infants and young children are mostly asymptomatic when newly infected with HBV, while 30% - 50% of older children or adults with acute hepatitis B may develop symptoms that are undistinguishable from hepatitis of other causes, such as fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, upper abdominal discomfort, tea-coloured urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and the whites of eyes).
- 🍷 Some people fail to clear the virus and develop **chronic hepatitis B (CHB)**. The younger a person is when infected with HBV, the higher the risk of developing chronic infection.
- 🍷 Some 90% of newborn babies infected with HBV would develop CHB
- 🍷 About 5% of HBV infection acquired in adulthood would lead to CHB
- 🍷 About 15 - 40% of untreated people with CHB could develop cirrhosis and liver cancer. They may remain asymptomatic until signs and symptoms develop secondary to serious liver damage.



- 🍷 About 80% of liver cancer patients in Hong Kong are infected with HBV.
- 🍷 Since 1988, universal childhood hepatitis B vaccination programme has been implemented in Hong Kong, greatly reducing the risk of HBV infection.

## How is HBV transmitted?

### Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT)

HBV can be transmitted from mothers with CHB to their babies during delivery. In endemic places, most persons with CHB acquired HBV infection by MTCT.



### Sexual contact

**Unprotected** sexual contact with an infected person



### Contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person



Contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids through broken skin, or mucosal membranes of the eyes or mouths



Sharing injection instruments for drug injection



Using contaminated instruments for ear-piercing, tattooing or acupuncture



Sharing personal items, which may be contaminated with blood, such as razors, shavers and nail trimmers



Reusing inadequately sterilised medical equipment



Transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products

HBV is **not** transmitted through breastfeeding or social contact, such as sharing eating utensils, dining together, hugging, shaking hands and kissing.

### Persons at higher risk of HBV infection should get tested

Persons considered **at higher risk of infection** include:

- 👉 Family members (such as parents, siblings and offspring) and sexual partners of people with CHB
- 👉 People who inject drugs
- 👉 Men who have sex with men
- 👉 HIV-positive people
- 👉 People who receive blood or blood products on a regular basis
- 👉 People on dialysis
- 👉 Healthcare workers who may have occupational exposure to blood or body fluids of patients

The test generally consists of blood tests on **hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)** and **hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs)** for assessing hepatitis B infection and immune status respectively.



Test results		Clinical interpretation
HBsAg	anti-HBs	
<b>Positive (+)</b>	<b>Negative (-)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infected with HBV</li> <li>• Should seek medical consultation as early as possible</li> <li>• Persistence of HBsAg for more than 6 months indicates <b>chronic HBV infection</b></li> </ul>
<b>Negative (-)</b>	<b>Positive (+)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No HBV infection</li> <li>• Have adequate protective antibodies against HBV infection</li> </ul>
<b>Negative (-)</b>	<b>Negative (-)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No HBV infection</li> <li>• Not immune to HBV infection and may consider hepatitis B vaccination</li> </ul>

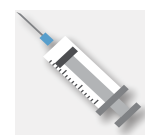
### How to treat HBV infection?

- 👉 **Antiviral medication** is effective in inhibiting HBV replication and reducing the risk of cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.
- 👉 Doctors will thoroughly assess the condition of each patient with CHB to determine when antiviral medication is needed.
- 👉 Patients with CHB should have **regular medical follow-up** and **relevant investigations**, such as blood test for liver function, alpha-fetoprotein and viral load, and ultrasonographic abdominal examination, for early detection and management of changes in the liver condition.



### How to prevent HBV infection?

- 👉 Receive hepatitis B vaccination to acquire immunity against HBV infection
- 👉 Wear gloves while handling open wounds with care and bandage them properly
- 👉 Do not share personal care items which may be contaminated with blood, such as razors and nail scissors
- 👉 Do not share needles or any other injecting equipment
- 👉 Practice safer sex and use condom properly
- 👉 Wear gloves and use household bleach to disinfect items contaminated by blood or body fluids



To get tested for hepatitis B, please consult your family doctor.



[www.hepatitis.gov.hk](http://www.hepatitis.gov.hk)

English



控制病毒性肝炎辦公室  
Viral Hepatitis Control Office



衛生防護中心  
Centre for Health Protection



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