

## Hepatitis B

**What is hepatitis B?** It is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It causes:

- No symptoms at all -OR
- Jaundice or yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes
- Abdominal pain, nausea, loss of appetite
- Dark urine, and pale-colored stools
- Low-grade fever, fatigue

Most people recover completely within weeks to several months. But approximately 1 % develop severe and fatal complications, and 10% percent become "chronic carriers" of hepatitis B infection-with or without symptoms for life.

**How does hepatitis B spread?** It spreads by blood, sexual fluids (semen and vaginal secretions), or saliva getting *into* another person's body by:

- Splashes of blood onto broken skin, eyes or mouth
- Sharing razors and toothbrushes
- Biting (rarely)
- Sexual intercourse
- Pregnancy, childbirth and breast feeding
- Blood transfusions and sharing injection equipment

**When is hepatitis B contagious?**

- From approximately one month *before* until one month *after* the start of jaundice. . "Chronic carriers," with or without symptoms, are usually contagious for life.
- After exposure, it can take six weeks to six months to develop the illness.
- How do I know if my child has hepatitis B? If you see symptoms, see your doctor immediately. Hepatitis B is diagnosed by special blood tests.

**What should I do if my child has hepatitis B?**

**Treatment:** Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help your child recover by encouraging rest, nutrition, and plenty of fluids to drink.
- For severe symptoms, hospitalization and special treatments are needed.

*If children or adults at home or school were exposed to hepatitis B within the previous three days, they can get a special injection and vaccine to prevent illness.*

**Keep your child home:** until one month after the start of jaundice and until he or she feels well enough to participate. "Chronic carriers" can attend as long as they don't have uncontrolled biting or oozing skin lesions that can't be covered. Notify your Head Start program.

**To limit the spread:**

- Immunize your children against hepatitis B, starting in infancy.
- For adults at risk, consider getting immunized against hepatitis B.

## **Hepatitis B (continued)**

- Follow universal blood and body fluid precautions:
  - Try to avoid direct contact with blood.
  - Wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves for dealing with bloody injuries, bloody diarrhea, oozing skin - rashes, and mouth or eye procedures.
  - Clean and disinfect spills of blood.
  - Seal bloodstained items in a plastic bag for disposal or laundering.
  - Wash hands after removing gloves; wash skin after contact with blood.
- Don't share food, pacifiers, teething rings, bottles, and toothbrushes.
- Clean and disinfect eating utensils, cups, mouthed toys, and dining tables after each use.
- Don't share injection equipment. If equipment is reused, disinfect it.
- Use condoms during sexual contact.
- Prevent sexual abuse.