

Hepatitis B

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that can infect humans and cause disease. It is spread through contact with blood or bodily fluids. This includes transmission from a mother to child, through needle sticks or sharing needles, or having unprotected sexual intercourse.

How common hepatitis B?

In 2016, 20,900 new cases of hepatitis B were identified. The rate of diagnosis of new cases of hepatitis B has declined in recent years.

In total, an estimated 2.2 million people in the United States are chronically infected with hepatitis B.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, fatigue, muscle and joint pains, rashes, and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and/or skin). However, many infected people have no symptoms.

Symptoms can occur 45–160 days after being exposed to the virus.

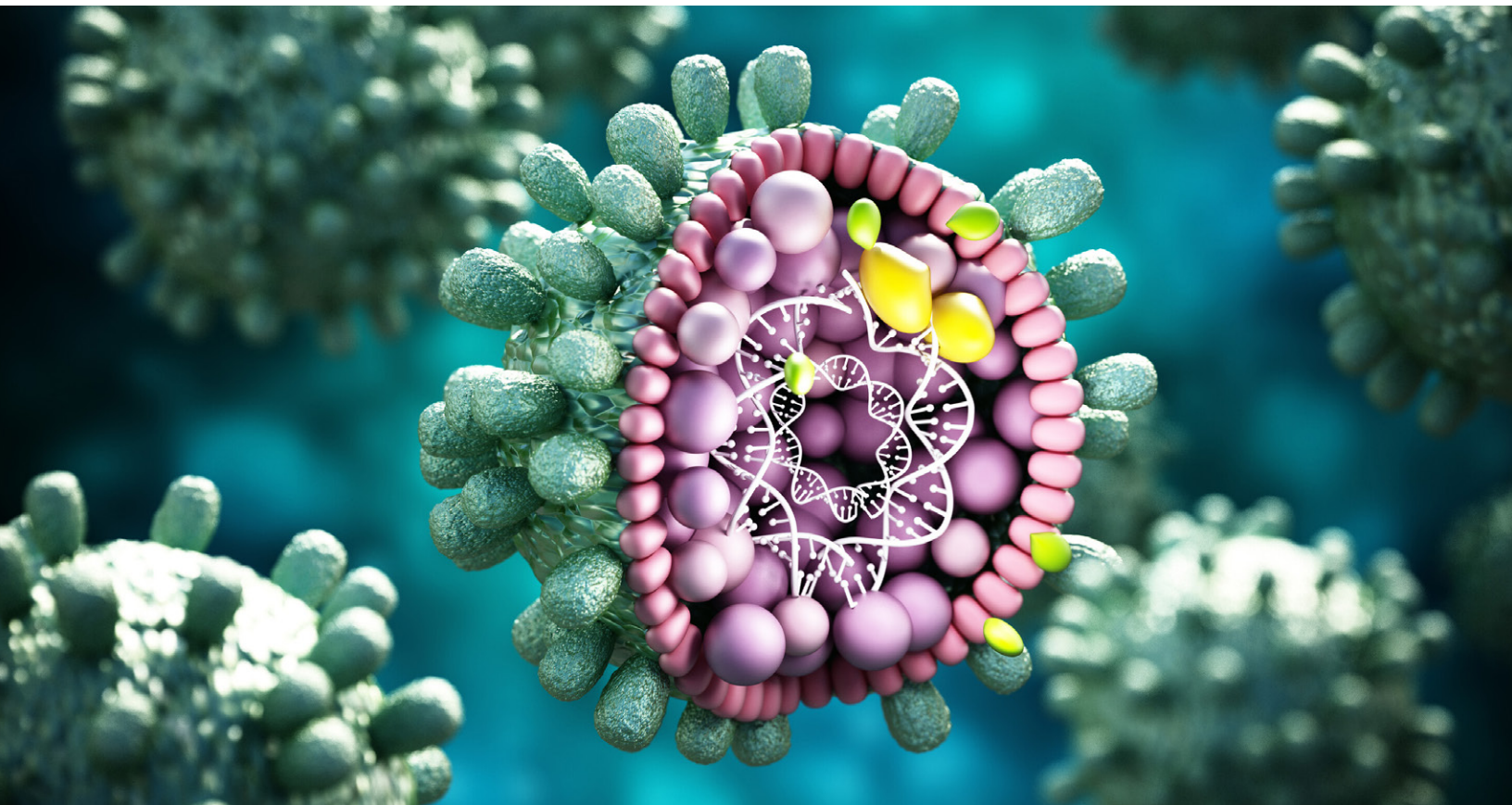
How is hepatitis B diagnosed?

Blood tests are used to diagnose hepatitis B infection.

What are the complications of hepatitis B?

Most people with hepatitis B recover completely within 3 months of being infected. However, the virus can cause a more severe or chronic infection in some people. Over time, chronic hepatitis B infection can scar the liver (called liver cirrhosis) or increase the risk of liver cancer.

It is not clear why some people completely recover while others develop chronic infection, but the age at which infection occurs can affect recovery. Newborns have a 90%–95% risk of becoming chronically infected. However, people who are infected at an older age have a decreased risk.



People with other underlying liver disease also have a higher risk of complications if infected with hepatitis B.

What is the hepatitis B vaccination?

The hepatitis B vaccine available in the United States contains a purified part of the virus. It cannot cause infection and is very safe. A series of 3 injections is needed for a person to develop protection against the virus.

In newborns of an infected mother, combining the hepatitis B vaccine with another medication called hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) can decrease the risk of chronic infection.

Who should get the hepatitis B vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all children. It is especially important for the following populations:

- People with chronic liver problems
- Infants born to infected mothers

- People living with someone who has hepatitis B
- People who may be exposed to hepatitis B at work
- People with more than 1 sexual partner

Is the hepatitis B vaccine well-tolerated?

Yes—most people only experience mild soreness at the injection site or low-grade fever. Rarely, however, more severe allergic reactions can occur.

Can hepatitis B be treated?

An individual management plan is recommended to treat hepatitis B. This decision is based on laboratory tests and risk factors. Discuss these risks and benefits with your child's doctor if treatment is recommended.

→ Locate a Pediatric Gastroenterologist

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general educational information as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.



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