

## > What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis is a condition in which the liver is inflamed and unable to function properly. Hepatitis B is caused by a virus.

People who have Hepatitis B may not show any symptoms at all. However, some people may have symptoms like:

- jaundice (yellowing of the skin)
- dark coloured urine
- pale stools
- fever
- prolonged tiredness
- poor appetite
- abdominal pain
- nausea and vomiting.



## > Is Hepatitis B serious?

**YES**, Hepatitis B is very serious. It can lead to complications like:

- acute hepatitis (episode of liver inflammation)
- chronic hepatitis (permanent liver inflammation)
- liver cirrhosis (permanent scarring and hardening of the liver)
- liver failure
- liver cancer.

Those who recover completely from Hepatitis B infection are immune to the disease. However, 1 in 10 people who get infected with the virus become carriers. A carrier is someone who carries the Hepatitis B virus permanently in his body. Hepatitis B carriers seldom show any symptoms. However, they can:

- spread the disease to others
- develop serious liver complications such as those above.



## > Can I get Hepatitis B?

If you have never been immunised or do not have antibodies from having a previous Hepatitis B infection, you are at risk of Hepatitis B infection.

The Hepatitis B virus is spread through the following ways:

- sexual contact with an infected person
- from an infected mother to her newborn during childbirth
- during acupuncture, body or ear piercing and tattooing if the needles used are contaminated with a Hepatitis B infected person's blood
- sharing of injection needles among drug abusers
- accidental cuts to the skin by a nail clipper, shaving blade or other instruments that are contaminated with a Hepatitis B infected person's blood
- contact with an infected person's blood through cuts or sores in the mouth or skin.

To minimise your risk of Hepatitis B infection, avoid situations that put you at risk.



## > How can I protect myself from Hepatitis B?

Get vaccinated!

The Hepatitis B vaccine is safe. It is also extremely effective provided you complete all 3 doses:

**1st dose – at the appointed date**

**2nd dose – 1 month after the 1st dose**

**3rd dose – 5 months after the 2nd dose**

**Make sure you complete all 3 doses.**

## > Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I check if I am a Hepatitis B carrier?

A simple blood test can tell if you are a carrier, are immune or need immunisation. See your family doctor regarding this blood test.

2. What should I do if I have been diagnosed to be a Hepatitis B carrier?

If you are a carrier:

- you will need to see your doctor regularly, usually every 6 months to a year, for follow-up tests
- your family members should go for blood tests and get immunised if they are not immune
- you must take precautions to prevent the spread of Hepatitis B to your family and loved ones (see page on “Can I get Hepatitis B?”).

3. Can I get Hepatitis B through kissing a carrier?

No, the risk is low, unless there are cuts or sores in your mouth and/or in the mouth of the carrier.

4. Is Hepatitis B part of the National Childhood Immunisation Programme?

Yes, it was integrated into the Programme from 1 September 1987.

5. What is the difference between Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B? Hepatitis A is spread through eating food contaminated with the Hepatitis A virus. Examples include partially cooked shellfish (oysters, clams) or in situations where there is poor hygiene (food/drink/utensils contaminated with an infected person’s faeces). Most people suffer an acute episode and upon recovery have immunity to Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B is spread by contact with blood or sexual fluids of an infected person or from an infected mother to her newborn during childbirth (see page on “Can I get Hepatitis B?”).



6. Is liver cancer common?

Liver cancer is the 3rd most common cancer among men in Singapore. **The main risk factor for liver cancer is Hepatitis B infection.**

7. Do I need the Hepatitis B vaccine?

Yes, please get yourself immunised against Hepatitis B if you are not a carrier or not already immune. Around 1 in 35 adult Singaporeans are Hepatitis B carriers. **Hepatitis B vaccination is your best protection.**

**The Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective. Not being protected can lead to complications like liver cancer which are serious and expensive to treat.**

**Protect yourself and your family. See your family doctor and get immunised against Hepatitis B today!**

**For more information, visit [www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg) or call HealthLine at 1800 223 1313.**

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What it takes to treat liver cancer.



What it takes to lower the risk of it.

**You only need 3 injections to protect yourself from Hepatitis B and lower the risk of liver cancer.**



Life. Live it strong!