

hepatitis^{wa}

Hepatitis B Fact Sheet

Hepatitis means 'inflammation (pain and swelling) of the liver'.

Hepatitis B is one type of a small germ (called a virus) that causes hepatitis. It is common in many parts of the world and is a major cause of scarring of the liver and liver cancer.

Symptoms include feeling tired, fever, stomach ache, loss of appetite, dark urine, nausea, vomiting and yellowing of skin & eyes.

Most adults recover from hepatitis B but some may develop chronic infection. Many people living with chronic hepatitis B do not show any symptoms. A person has chronic hepatitis B when the infection lasts longer than 6 months- it **does not** reflect the severity of the virus.

A simple blood test by a doctor can show if a person has been exposed to, or is living with hepatitis B. If no previous exposure to hepatitis B there is a **safe, easy and effective** vaccination available.

Hepatitis B can be transmitted from person to person by blood, semen or vaginal fluids. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during birth. It cannot be transmitted through breastfeeding, unless the nipples are cracked or bleeding.

A person **cannot** become infected with hepatitis B from water, tears, urine, faeces, sneezing, shaking hands, mosquitoes, toilet seats, coughing, hugging and sharing crockery, cutlery or eating utensils.

Hepatitis B is not the same as HIV or hepatitis C, although all of these viruses can be transmitted by blood to blood contact.

Look after yourself...

- Stay in regular contact with your liver specialist or GP.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or drink less.
- Eat a well-balanced low fat diet.
- Exercise daily.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Rest when you are tired and reduce stress
- Drink plenty of water.

Protect yourself and others...

- Have your OWN toothbrushes, dental floss, razors, nail files or body jewellery- do NOT share with others.
- Practice safe sex- use condoms and water based lubricant.
- Clean and dress wounds immediately.
- Insist on sterile equipment for tattooing, ear or body-piercing, acupuncture or electrolysis.
- Avoid sharing any drug injecting equipment (e.g. needles, syringes, spoons, tourniquets, and water).

Testing and Vaccination

Ask your family doctor for a test and discuss if you require the vaccination.

Alternatively you can make an appointment and speak confidentially with the following agencies:

- ✓ **Family Planning WA:** 9227 6177 (*mention HepatitisWA*)
- ✓ **Women's Health & Family Services** (for women): 9227 8122
- ✓ **Perth Primary Care Network:** 9376 9200
- ✓ **South Metro Multicultural Health Clinic:** 9458 0585

With permission of the parents, all babies born in Australia are vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

For more information please call the Hepatitis Helpline on 9325 8538 (metro) or 1800 800 700 (country) or visit the website

www.hepatitiswa.com.au