

Hepatitis B

Updated 11/05

Hepatitis B is a fairly common liver disease caused by a virus. Symptoms may appear two to six months after exposure. Signs and symptoms are less common in children than adults. Management of chronic infection includes monitoring for development of liver disease and treatment of ensuing symptoms. High risk groups include drug abusers who share needles; certain health care workers who have contact with infected blood; men who have sex with men, particularly those with multiple partners; people in custodial care (in settings such as developmental centers) before the mid 1980s; hemodialysis patients; certain household contacts of an infected person; and infants born to mothers who are hepatitis B carriers. Highest rate of disease occurs in 20-49-year-olds.

Transmission

- Direct contact with infected body fluids, usually by needle stick injury or sexual contact
- Having sex with an infected person without using a condom; sharing drug needles
- Having a tattoo or body piercing done with non-sterile tools that were used on someone else
- Getting pricked with a needle that has infected blood on it
- An infected woman can give hepatitis B to her baby at birth or through her breast milk

Symptoms

- Fatigue, poor appetite, fever, vomiting
- Joint pain, hives, rash.
- Dark yellow urine and jaundice

Treatment/Care

- Adefovir dipivoxil, alpha interferon, lamivudine, and entecavir are four drugs licensed for the treatment of persons with chronic hepatitis B

Complications

- Death from chronic liver disease
- Irreparable liver damage requiring a liver transplant
- Cirrhosis and liver cancer

Prevention

- Vaccine to prevent hepatitis B is recommended for people in high-risk settings who have not already been infected and infants who are born to mothers who are carrying the virus. It is also recommended for all children as part of their routine childhood immunizations beginning at birth or two months of age and at entry to 7th grade if not previously immunized. A special hepatitis B immune globulin is also available for people who are exposed to the virus.
- Prevention of needle sticks through routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps
- As for HIV/AIDS, avoidance of unsafe sex

In Florida for adults over the age of 19, there were 216 cases as of July 2005 and 225 cases in 2004. There were four reported cases of Hepatitis B in children under the age of 19 in 2003. Three of those cases were confirmed with one case each in Broward County, Okaloosa County, and Palm Beach County. In 2004, there was one confirmed

case in Hillsborough County. As of July 2005, there were two confirmed cases, with one in Lee County and another in Palm Beach County.

More information

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/b/index.htm>

http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepb_ez/

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>

<http://www.who.int/vaccines/en/hepatitisb.shtml>