

Hepatitis B in young people, patient information (2017-02-03)

Information and rules of conduct. County Medical Officers' infection prevention sheet.

Why have you been given this information?

A blood test has shown that you have hepatitis B. This leaflet contains information about hepatitis B and what you, as somebody who has hepatitis B, needs to think about.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that is present in the liver, blood and body fluids (e.g., sperm). You can have hepatitis B for a long time without knowing you have it. Even when you don't have any symptoms, hepatitis B is highly infectious. If you have the infection for many years, you can get problems with your liver.

How do you get hepatitis B?

Many people have hepatitis B. According to figures for 2016 from the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 240 million people throughout the world have hepatitis B. Most people are infected by their mothers when they are born.

Hepatitis B is also infectious when you have sex without using a condom. All types of sexual intercourse without a condom, anal, vaginal, or oral, can transfer the hepatitis B virus.

Hepatitis B can also be spread via the blood. You can be infected if you get blood infected with the hepatitis B virus in your blood, or on mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth, or in an open cut. Blood is NOT infectious if it comes into contact with whole skin.

Hepatitis B is NOT infectious when you get together socially with friends, e.g., hugging and kissing friends or sharing glasses/plates/cutlery. Neither is it infectious if you use the same toilet.

What should I do to prevent infecting others?

You must always follow the **rules of conduct** that your doctor gives you:

- You must come for a check-up when your doctor sends you an appointment.
- Before you have sex with someone, you must tell them that you have hepatitis B.
- You must use a contraceptive/condom if you have sex with a partner who is not immune. This means that they have not had hepatitis B or have not been vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- When you go for medical or dental treatment, you must tell them that your blood is infectious.
- You must also tell the people that you have an infectious disease if you want to get a tattoo, body piercing, pierced ears or other treatment where you might bleed.
- Never share your razor or toothbrush with anyone.
- If someone does come into contact with your blood, e.g., in an open wound, you must tell them immediately that you have hepatitis B so that they can go to the healthcare services and get a free vaccination against hepatitis B.
- If you use syringes or needles, you must not share them with other people. You must also not share mixing cups or other equipment.
- You must not donate blood, sperm, eggs, or organs for transplants.
- Tell your doctor if you have a sex partner or family member who might need the hepatitis B vaccine.

There is also **advice on hygiene** that is useful to follow to prevent infecting others:

- Be sure to use a plaster or bandage even on small cuts.
- If somebody helps you to change a bandage, they must use plastic gloves.
- Tidy up any bloody materials carefully, e.g., put them in double plastic bags before throwing them away.
- Any blood on your clothes can be washed in the washing machine.
- Blood spots on the floor, for example, can be wiped up using paper towels that are thrown away. Then wash thoroughly with water and detergent.

What should I think about before having sex with a partner?

You must tell your partner that you have hepatitis B. You must also use a condom if your partner is not immune (i.e., if they have not had hepatitis B or have not been vaccinated against hepatitis B).

The best thing to do is to go with your partner to your doctor or clinic so that your partner can be given the free vaccination against hepatitis B before you have sex.

If you expose somebody to infection, for example by having sex with a non-vaccinated person and do not use a condom, they can also be given the free hepatitis B vaccine afterwards to reduce the risk of being infected. The vaccine is most effective if given no later than two days after being infected.

How often do I need to go to my doctor for a check-up?

Your doctor will decide how often you need to go in for a check-up. Generally, this is once a year, but sometimes a check-up is needed more often.

Is it dangerous to get hepatitis B?

Most people with hepatitis B never get problems with their liver, but a few people may after many years of infection. In the worst cases, those who get problems can get cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

When you see your doctor regularly, he or she will check how your liver is functioning and ensure that you get treatment if you should need it.

Is there any treatment for hepatitis B?

If it is necessary, there is treatment but, in general, young people do not need treatment. Your doctor can tell you whether this is relevant for you.

The treatment cannot stop/remove the infection, but it can decrease the risk of liver problems.

Can I become a parent?

Yes! It is important that your sex partner is immune to (e.g., has been vaccinated) hepatitis B before you start trying to have a baby.

If you are pregnant, there are ways to stop the hepatitis B virus from being passed on to the baby. This includes receiving hepatitis B treatment towards the end of the pregnancy. The baby will be given protection against hepatitis B. It will be vaccinated as soon as it is born, and will be given several booster doses during its first year. This means that there is a very low risk that the child will be infected.

Can I do any type of job or any type of leisure activity?

You can do any type of job when you have hepatitis B. If the job means entails a risk that you could stick yourself and get blood on someone, then ask your doctor about this. The same applies if you are unsure whether you can train for a particular profession. You do not need to tell your employer that you have hepatitis B.

If you want to play a sport that possibly results in bleeding, talk to your doctor. Your doctor can decide if it is OK for you to play.

Hepatitis B is covered by the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act – what does this mean?

The Swedish Communicable Diseases Act is intended to lower the risk that certain infections, such as hepatitis B, are spread to other people.

As someone who has hepatitis B, you are entitled to the free care and treatment provided for hepatitis B.

You must follow the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor, see Section 4. You must also help with contact tracing (see Section 12).

If you have been given a rule of conduct which you think is wrong, you can contact the County Medical Officer in your region/county.

Contact tracing – what does this mean?

It is very important to find other people who have hepatitis B so that they too can get their liver checked, and prevent the infection from spreading to others. Therefore, if you have hepatitis B, you must tell your doctor the names of people you have had sex with, or in other way exposed to a risk of infection (e.g., shared syringes or needles), so that they can be informed that they need to be tested for hepatitis B. Any information you provide is confidential and they will not know who you are.

Your doctor will also make sure that your family and siblings are tested for hepatitis B if they are in Sweden.

Would you like to know more?

More information about hepatitis B can be found at

www.1177.se

www.umo.se

www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se

www.cdc.gov

www.who.int