**What is hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that ranges in severity from mild illness to a serious lifelong illness.¹ Hepatitis B infection can be either acute (short term) or chronic (long term).¹ Acute hepatitis B infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after exposure to the virus and does not always lead to chronic hepatitis B.¹ Chronic hepatitis B infection is a long-term illness that occurs when the virus remains in a person’s body.¹ In 2014, there were approximately 19,200 new cases of hepatitis B in the United States and an estimated 850,000 to 2.2 million people living with chronic hepatitis B.²

**Transmission**

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen or other body fluid infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected.¹

Activities that can spread hepatitis B¹:
- Birth (spread from infected mother to baby during birth)
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes or other injection drug equipment
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Direct ‘blood to blood’ contact or ‘blood to body fluid’ exposure of an infected person
- Blood to blood exposure from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

The likelihood of developing chronic hepatitis B depends on the age at which a person becomes infected with the virus.¹

Hepatitis B is not spread by¹:
- Sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing or sneezing

**Symptoms: acute & chronic**

Most people will develop symptoms from acute hepatitis B virus.¹ However, many young children do not develop symptoms if under the age of 5 years.¹

**Acute symptoms¹**
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine, clay-color bowel movements
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellow color in skin or eyes)

On average, symptoms appear 90 days after exposure to the hepatitis B virus, but they can appear anywhere between 6 weeks and 6 months after exposure.¹ Symptoms usually last a few weeks, but some people may be sick for as long as 6 months.¹

**Chronic symptoms** of hepatitis B can be similar to acute hepatitis B, but most people with chronic hepatitis B remain symptom-free for as long as 20 – 30 years.² Roughly 15% – 25% of people with chronic hepatitis B will develop serious liver conditions, such as cirrhosis (or scarring of the liver) or liver cancer.¹

- Chronic hepatitis B is a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems, including¹:
  - Liver damage
  - Liver failure
  - Liver cancer
  - Death
- Approximately 1,800 people die each year from hepatitis B-related liver disease.³

For additional information on Hepatitis B in Indiana, please visit: [http://www.in.gov/isdh/25477.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/25477.htm)
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References
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/bfaq.htm#FAQ03
7. Indiana State Department of Health http://www.in.gov/isdh/26935.htm