

## Health Care Education

NEW WORLD HOPE ORGANIZATION

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“Healthy People. Better World”



### Hepatitis B

**What is Hepatitis B?** Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV), which can cause lifelong infection, scarring of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death.

**Why is the Liver so important?** The liver is the largest, heaviest and one of the most important internal organs. Dark red in color, it weighs 1-1.5 kg and is located behind the lower right part of your ribs. It stores vitamins, sugars, fats and other nutrients from the food you eat and then releases them to the body when needed. It also builds basic chemicals that your body needs to stay healthy. Last but not least, it removes waste products, harmful bacteria and toxic chemicals from your blood. In other words - it is the powerhouse, recycling, and disposal plant of the body. Life is not possible without the liver.

**What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?** Sometimes a person with HBV infection has no symptoms at all. The older you are, the more prone you are to have symptoms. You might be infected with HBV (and be spreading the virus) and not know it. In contrast, Hepatitis A virus causes inflammation of the liver, which leads to further complications and impairs proper functioning of the liver. This could lead to death if not treated.

Hepatitis B Symptoms include yellow skin or yellowing of the whites of your eyes (jaundice), tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, and joint pain.

If symptoms occur, they occur on the average of 12 weeks after exposure to Hepatitis B virus. Symptoms occur in about 70% of patients.

Symptoms are more likely to occur in adults than in children.

**Can Hepatitis B be prevented?** The best things a person can do to prevent the transmission of the virus is to practice safe and protective habits. Special caution should be maintained due to high risks of transmitting the virus sexually or by contaminated by blood.

Married couples, no matter what the duration of the relationship, should avoid sharing personal items, such as razors or toothbrushes, and infected women should abstain from sexual activity during menstruation. Either partner with infections that cause bleeding in the genital or urinary areas should avoid sexual activity until the infection is no longer active.

Infected patients should use condoms and contraceptives that prevent passage of the virus, possibly even in relationships that last for years.

**How does Hepatitis B spread?** HBV is spread when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected. For example, HBV is spread by having sex with an infected person without using a condom (the effectiveness of latex condoms in preventing infection with HBV is unknown, but their proper use might reduce transmission), by sharing drugs, needles, through needle sticks or sharp exposures on the job, or from an infected mother to her baby during birth.

Hepatitis B is not spread through food or water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, coughing, and sneezing or by casual contact.

