

HEPATITIS B

What causes it?

Virus (HBV).

How do I get it?

- Hepatitis B is very infectious and easily spread by exposure to body fluids such as saliva, semen, vaginal fluids and blood
- can be spread by sexual contact
- may also be transmitted by unclean needles for drug use or tattooing
- an infected mother can infect her child during pregnancy, childbirth or breast-feeding

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can be mild to severe:

- feeling weak or tired
- fever or flu-like symptoms
- loss of appetite or weight
- feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up
- rash or yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)

How do you test for it?

Blood test.

What treatment is available?

- in most cases, your body's natural immunity helps you get over the infection completely
- a few cases become acute hepatitis with serious liver damage – your health care provider will advise you on how to reduce the harmful effects of hepatitis B
- about 10% of those infected become chronic carriers – they don't have symptoms most of the time but can infect others
- your health care provider will let you know when you can have sex again and the precautions you need to take avoid infecting others
- get plenty of sleep, eat a healthy diet, cut down or stop smoking or drinking alcohol

What complications can happen?

- inflammation or severe damage (cirrhosis) of the liver
- death (rare)

What precautions should I take if I have hepatitis B?

If you are hepatitis B positive:

- practice safer sex
- avoid blood to blood contact
- clean up blood spills with 1 part bleach to 9 parts water to disinfect or kill the hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- don't share toothbrushes, razors, sex toys or other items that could have infected blood or body fluids on them

Remember that HBV can survive outside the body for up to 7 days on a dry surface.

What else do I need to know?

- *there is a vaccine to protect those at risk of hepatitis B such as a child who has an infected mother or the sexual partner of an infected person*
- free vaccine is available in 3 doses over 6 months

Where can I get tested?

You can get tested at:

- YCDC (Yukon Communicable Disease Control)
#4 Hospital Road
667-8323 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8323
- Community Health Centre
- [Medical Clinics](#)