

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver and can lead to liver disease.

Symptoms – Acute Infection

Not all people who get Hepatitis B have symptoms. If symptoms do occur they may include loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, fever, joint pain and jaundice (skin and eyes become yellow).

Symptoms – Chronic Infection

One in ten adults infected with Hepatitis B will not clear the virus from their bodies and will become chronic carriers. These people may have no symptoms, but later may develop chronic liver disease and be at an increased risk of liver cancer.

Chronic carriers can pass the virus on to sexual and injecting partners.

Transmission

Hepatitis B can be transmitted through:

Blood to blood contact

- sharing injecting equipment;
- non-sterile tattooing;
- body piercing;
- skin penetration activities; and
- sharing toothbrushes and razors.

Unprotected sexual contact

- sex without the use of condoms, dams and lubricant.

Mother to baby

- during delivery and in early infancy.

Diagnosis

Hepatitis B is diagnosed by blood testing. Tests can tell the difference between new or past infection, if the person is a carrier or if they have been vaccinated.

Treatment

Most people will clear the Hepatitis B virus without medication. Treatment is available for those chronically infected by the virus. Treatment is not always effective and consists of a course of injections and/or oral medications. Some people choose to use complimentary treatments.

Complications

Chronic Hepatitis B carriers are at risk of developing chronic liver damage and a small number of carriers are at risk of liver failure and/or liver cancer.

How to avoid getting Hepatitis B:

- vaccination;
- never share needles, syringes or any equipment if injecting;
- always use your own razor and toothbrush;

- ensure any instruments that are used for body piercing, tattooing or skin penetration are single use and sterile before use;
- if helping someone who is bleeding use gloves so you do not come in contact with their blood;
- cover any breaks in your skin; and
- always use condoms, dams and lubricant.

Vaccination

Vaccination against Hepatitis B is available from general practitioners and the Sexual Health Service.

Sexual Health Service Tasmania is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30 am until 5.00 pm. Clinic times vary from site to site so please contact your local office for details (see contact details on the back of this pamphlet).

**Sexual Health Service
Clinical Services**

HOBART

60 Collins Street
Hobart 7000
Ph: (03) 6233 3557

LAUNCESTON

42 Canning Street
Launceston 7250
Ph: (03) 6336 2216

DEVONPORT

23 Steele Street
Devonport 7310
Ph: (03) 6421 7759

BURNIE

11 Jones Street
BURNIE 7320
Ph: (03) 6434 6315

**SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE
A joint Australian and State
Government Program**

The Royal Hobart Hospital is Tasmania's largest hospital and provides a number of state-wide services including cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, burns management, hyperbaric and diving medicine, neonatal intensive care and high-risk obstetrics. It is the major teaching and research hospital for the State and works closely with the University of Tasmania.

Many students in the health care professions are taught within the Hospital, and gaining skills in examining and interviewing patients is an important part of their education and training. We ask for your co-operation and encourage you to participate in our teaching and research activities. Your permission is required for participation.

The Royal Hobart Hospital encourages feedback from patients, relatives and visitors. This feedback helps staff to better understand the needs of patients and provide the best possible patient care.



**The Royal Hobart Hospital
is a smoke-free site**

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**Information
Pamphlet**



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