

Hepatitis B

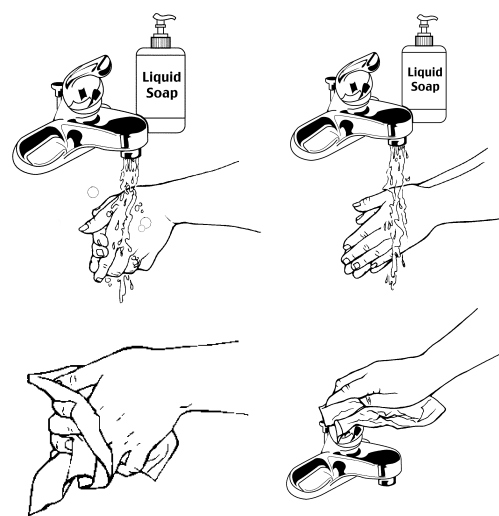
The hepatitis (hep ah TIE tiss) B virus is one of the several viruses that can cause hepatitis. Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. Usually it is caused by infections or side effects of medicines. It is sometimes called “yellow jaundice” because the liver injury from hepatitis may cause an increase in bilirubin. Bilirubin is a chemical in the blood that can cause the skin to turn yellow. The hepatitis B virus can live in a person for his or her whole life. A blood test can show if the virus is present.

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus found in blood, semen, vaginal secretions and saliva. It is mainly spread through unprotected sexual activity or exposure to blood. The virus enters the body through a cut, a scraped area of skin or through mucous membranes (like the inside lining of the mouth). Hepatitis B can occur through direct blood-to-blood contact. It can be passed from an infected mother to her newborn during the delivery process, by an infected person during unprotected sex, and by the use of unsterile needles.

How to Help Stop the Spread of Hepatitis B

There are several things you can do to help stop the spread of this disease. Please follow these instructions until your doctor tells you the child with hepatitis is completely well:

- **Good hand washing by all family members must be done.** Hands should be washed using soap and warm water before meals, after using the bathroom and before preparing or serving food.
- Wash your hands after caring for your child. You may have come in contact with the hepatitis B virus from such things as changing diapers, cleaning up vomit, or exposure to blood.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling blood (like helping to stop a nosebleed or bandaging a cut). Wash your hands after removing the gloves.
- Hepatitis B can be spread by sexual activity. Not having sex (abstinence) is the best way to keep Hepatitis B from being spread sexually. If an infected person has sex, **a condom should be used every time.** Condoms should be used until the doctor says there is no longer any risk of spreading the disease. (See Helping Hand HH-IV-46, **Condoms.**)
- All family members who are not infected should get Hepatitis B vaccines (2 to 3 shots).



Picture 1 Good hand washing is very important!

Good Nutrition and Rest

- All family members should eat a well-balanced diet that includes foods shown in the graphic MyPlate (below). You can find more information about balanced nutrition on the website www.ChooseMyPlate.gov (Picture 2).
- All family members should get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Young children who are ill should rest during the day when possible.



Picture 2 A well-balanced diet includes these five food groups in the proportions shown.

Medical Care

- Your doctor may give injections (special immune globulin and vaccine) to all family members who have been exposed to hepatitis. These medicines will prevent hepatitis.
- You will be contacted by the Health Department. A Health Department worker may visit your home to help you control this disease. He or she will ask several questions and will answer any questions you may have.
- It is very important for your child to keep taking all medicine as prescribed by the doctor.
- It is very important to bring your child to all follow-up appointments with the doctor.

Chronic (Long Term) Infection

After a Hepatitis B infection, most people recover. The virus is no longer in the blood or other body fluids. However, some people may not get rid of the Hepatitis B virus once they have been infected. These people are infected for a long time and are sometimes called chronic carriers.

A blood test can show if someone has been infected with Hepatitis B and if he or she is immune to Hepatitis B from either a past infection or from the Hepatitis B vaccine.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor or the Primary Care Clinic at (614) 722-5743 if any of the following occurs:

- the child has not felt hungry or wanted to eat in the past 24 hours.
- your child's fever is over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit for more than 2 days.
- your child has a stomachache.
- your child vomits (throws up) more than 2 times in an hour.
- your child's skin or the white part of the eyes turns yellow.
- your child is overly tired for more than 2 days.

Return to School or Child Care

- Your child may return to normal daily activity (school or daycare, play with friends) when the child's doctor or the doctor who discharges him or her from the hospital says it is OK. This will be when your child is no longer jaundiced or vomiting.
- A child who scratches, bites or "gets into fights," has an overall skin condition, or a bleeding problem should probably not attend child care while he or she has hepatitis. Your child's doctor can help you make this decision.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse.