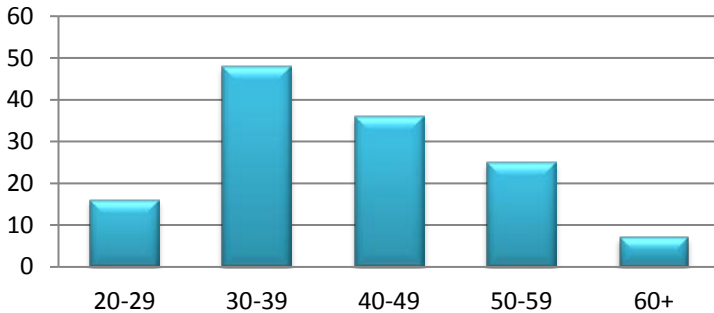




What is hepatitis B?

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

Figure 1. Reported hepatitis B cases by age group, Indiana, 2015 (n= 132)



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.¹ 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.¹



Testing

Many different blood tests are available to diagnose hepatitis B.¹ The hepatitis B blood tests can be conducted and interpreted only by your doctor.¹

Pregnant women:

- When a pregnant woman has prenatal care, she is automatically tested for hepatitis B when the doctor runs a series of routine blood tests.¹

Testing is *now* recommended for⁶:

- Certain geographic locations with high prevalence
- People who were not vaccinated as children
- Injection drug users
- People with medical conditions, especially diabetes
- Men who have sex with men

Testing *continues* to be recommended for⁶:

- Pregnant women
- Infants born to a hepatitis B-positive mother
- Household contacts and sex partners of a hepatitis B-positive person
- People who are HIV-positive or hepatitis C-positive
- People who have had a 'blood to blood' or 'blood to body fluid' exposure
- Dialysis patients

Treatment

Adults:

Currently, seven drugs are approved in the United States for *adults* living with chronic hepatitis B, including antiviral drugs taken daily and immune modulator drugs given as an injection.³ It is important to note that not all adults need to be treated, but all adults with chronic hepatitis B should be seen by a liver specialist.³

Children:

Currently, five drugs are approved in the United States for *children* living with hepatitis B.⁴ It is important to note that all children and teens with chronic hepatitis B should be seen regularly by a pediatric liver specialist, but not every child or teen needs to be treated.⁴

Prevention/Vaccination

An effective hepatitis B vaccine has existed in the United States since 1981.² This vaccine is a three-dose series given over a 6-month period.¹ All children up to the age of 18 years are recommended to be vaccinated, in addition to high-risk groups.⁵ More than 1 billion doses of the hepatitis B vaccine have been given worldwide, and it is considered one of the safest and most effective vaccines ever made.⁵

Fast facts

- Hepatitis B is mainly transmitted by blood of an infected individual.¹
- Hepatitis B can be spread to non-infected individuals through birth, sexual contacts, sharing needles or coming into direct contact with blood that contains hepatitis B virus.¹
- There are two forms of hepatitis B: acute and chronic. Symptoms of acute hepatitis B usually appear within 90 days of exposure, but a person with chronic hepatitis B can remain symptom free for 20 – 30 years.¹
- Hepatitis B has a safe and effective vaccine available in a three-dose series.²

References

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