

## What is it?

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. The virus is spread through body fluids such as blood, saliva, semen and vaginal fluid. People who can't get rid of the hepatitis B virus from their body after six months have chronic hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B can cause serious forms of liver disease, including cancer.

Chronic hepatitis B has different phases which change over time. Treatment is different for each phase.

Chronic hepatitis B has no cure and no matter which phase you are in, will need to have regular tests so that any liver complications are detected and managed early. With the right treatment, symptoms can be managed and you can have a good quality of life.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will review your overall health as well as checking which phase you are in. Your treatment will be targeted to that phase.

Your GP may talk to you about the risk of infecting others. You may need to tell past sexual partners you have hepatitis B. Your family members and friends might need to be tested.

Your treatment plan may also include steps to improve your overall health and wellbeing, including:

- Good nutrition
- Quitting smoking and cutting back on alcohol (or stopping completely)
- Maintaining a healthy weight

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you at least every six months to review your disease phase and treatment plan. This may include blood tests and special scans of your liver. If your disease phase changes, you will need a new review and treatment plan.

Your GP will also check your overall health and liver health. If needed, your GP may refer you to a specialist for further treatment.

## What can I do?

Continue to see your GP regularly and follow your treatment plan. Talk to your GP about a specialist referral if you feel like your symptoms aren't improving.

Take active steps to maintain good health. Ask for a referral for a dietitian if you'd like some help developing a healthy meal plan.

There is a vaccine for hepatitis B. Encourage your family and partner to get vaccinated.

## Phases of hepatitis B

There are five disease phases for hepatitis B and you may move back and forth between them

### Silent

*Hepatitis B is not doing harm and treatment is not needed*

### Damage

*Hepatitis B is damaging your liver and you may need treatment*

### Control

*Hepatitis B is under control but you may need more monitoring*

### Escape

*Hepatitis B is attacking your liver again and you may need treatment*

### Clear

*Hepatitis B is gone but some monitoring will still occur*

For more information on the different phases, see the [Hep B Bear and You](#) resource

## Hepatitis B and Pregnancy

If you fall pregnant and have hepatitis B, make sure your antenatal carer is aware. There are some simple steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission



# Hepatitis B

## What supports are available?

### South Western Sydney Local Health District

There are liver clinics based at Bankstown, Campbelltown and Liverpool Hospitals. These clinics provide specialist treatment for hepatitis B. They are also able to run specialist tests to check your liver health. Your GP will refer you to these clinics if it is needed.

### Private specialists

Your GP may refer you to a private specialist called a hepatologist or gastroenterologist if it is needed.



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How can I protect my liver?
- How can I prevent spreading it to others?
- Do I need to see a specialist?
- Can I donate blood?
- What tests will I need to have?
- Who can I talk to if I need support?



## Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about chronic hepatitis B, the following resources can help:

- **South Western Sydney Local Health District** – Gastroenterology and Liver Department: [gastroliverpool.com.au](http://gastroliverpool.com.au)
  - Hepatitis B (Bear) and you
  - Understanding Hepatitis B Part 1 - Chronic Hepatitis B (video)
  - Understanding Hepatitis B Part 2 - Interpreting Test Results (video)
  - Understanding Hepatitis B Part 3 - Support Services (video)
- **Hepatitis NSW** – What is Hepatitis B: [hep.org.au](http://hep.org.au)
- **Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service** – Multilingual HIV and hepatitis factsheets: [mhahs.org.au](http://mhahs.org.au)
- **NSW Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service** – Hepatitis B: [mhahs.org.au](http://mhahs.org.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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