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Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). In some people, HBV remains in the body, causing long-lasting diseases and long-term liver problems. How Do People Get Hepatitis B? Most commonly, HBV spreads: through sexual activity with HBV-infected people through contaminated needles or syringes together to inject the drug through HBV-infected mothers to their newborn son Who Is At Risk for Hepatitis B? In the United States, the most common way people are infected with HBV is through condomless sex with someone who has the disease. People who share needles are also at risk because needles are often not sterilized. What is Chronic Hepatitis B? Doctors refer to hepatitis B infection as acute or chronic: Acute HBV infection is a short-term disease that clears within 6 months when a person is exposed to the virus. A person who still has HBV after 6 months is said to have chronic hepatitis B infection. It is a long-term disease, which means the virus remains in the body and causes lifelong illness. An estimated 850,000 to more than 2 million people in the U.S. have chronic HBV. The younger a person is when infected, the more likely it is to chronic hepatitis B. About 90% of babies with HBV will develop chronic infections. That risk drops to 6%–10% when a person over the age of 5 is infected. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that all infants get the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine within 12–24 hours of birth. They will get two more doses later, at the age of 1-2 months and at the age of 6-18 months. What Are The Signs & Symptoms of HBV Infection? HBV can cause a variety of symptoms, from mild illness and general feeling of being unwell to more serious chronic liver disease that can lead to liver cancer. A person with hepatitis B may have symptoms similar to those caused by other viral infections, such as the flu. The person may be: being extra tired of feeling like vomiting or actually vomiting doesn't feel like eating having a mild HBV fever can also cause darker than regular urination, jaundice (when the skin and whites of the eyes look yellow), and abdominal pain. People exposed to hepatitis B may begin to have symptoms from 1 to 6 months later. Symptoms can last for weeks to months. In some people, hepatitis B causes little or no symptoms. But even someone who does not have any symptoms can still spread the disease to others. What Problems Can Cause Hepatitis B? Hepatitis B (also called serum hepatitis) is a serious infection. It can cause cirrhosis (permanent scarring) of the liver, liver failure, or liver cancer, which can lead to severe and even disease If a pregnant woman has hepatitis B virus, the baby has a very high chance of having it unless the baby gets a special immune injection and the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine at birth. Sometimes, HBV does not cause symptoms until a person has an infection for a while. At that time the person may have more serious problems, such as liver damage. How Is Hepatitis B Diagnosed? A person with symptoms or who may have been exposed to the virus through the use of sex or medication should see a doctor immediately for a blood test. Blood tests can also tell if a person has an acute infection or a chronic infection. How Is Hepatitis B Treated? There is no cure for HBV. The doctor will advise someone with hepatitis B infection on how to manage symptoms - such as getting a lot of rest or drinking fluids. Someone who is too sick to eat or drink will need hospital treatment. In most cases, older children and adolescents affected by hepatitis B recover and may develop natural immunity to hepatitis B infection in the future. Most feel better within 6 months. Healthcare providers will keep an eye on patients developing chronic hepatitis B. What Happens After Hepatitis B Infection? Some people carry the virus in their bodies and it is contagious for the rest of their lives. They should not drink alcohol, and should check with their doctor before taking any medication (prescription, on the table, or supplements) to ensure this will not cause more liver damage. Anyone who has ever tested positive for hepatitis B cannot be a blood donor. Can Hepatitis B Be Prevented? Yes. Newborns in the United States now routinely get the hepatitis B vaccine as a series of three shots over a 6-month period. There has been a huge drop in the number of hepatitis B cases over the past 25 years thanks to immunisations. Doctors also recommend chasing vaccinations for all children and adolescents younger than 19 who did not get the vaccine as infants or did not get all three doses. Some children may need to be revaccinated at a later date. These include children: If a person who has not been vaccinated is exposed to HBV, the doctor may provide vaccines and/or injections of immune globulin containing antibodies to the virus to try to prevent the person from being infected. That's why it's so important to see a doctor immediately after possible exposure to the virus. To prevent the spread of hepatitis B through infected blood and other bodily fluids, adults and adolescents should: always use latex condoms when having sex (oral, vagina, or anal) avoid contact with the blood of an infected person not using intravenous drugs or sharing needles or other drug tools do not share things like toothbrushes or razor tato research and place piercing carefully to make sure they do not reuse needles without sterilize them properly Reviewed by: Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph, MD Date review: February 2020 Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes inflammation and liver damage Inflammation is swelling that occurs tissues of the body become injured or infected. Inflammation can damage organs. Viruses attack normal cells in your body. Many viruses cause infections that can spread from person to person. Hepatitis B virus spreads through contact with blood, semen, or or bodily fluids. You can take steps to protect yourself from hepatitis B, including getting the hepatitis B vaccine. If you have hepatitis B, you can take steps to prevent the spread of hepatitis B to others. Hepatitis B virus can cause acute or chronic infections. Acute Hepatitis B is a short-term infection. Some people have symptoms, which may last several weeks. In some cases, symptoms last up to 6 months. Sometimes the body is able to fight infection and the virus disappears. If the body is unable to fight the virus, the virus does not disappear, and chronic hepatitis B infection occurs. Most healthy adults and children older than 5 years who have hepatitis B are getting better and do not develop chronic hepatitis B infection.6 Chronic hepatitis B hepatitis B is a long-lasting infection. Your chances of developing chronic hepatitis B are greater if you were infected with the virus as a child. About 90 percent of babies infected with hepatitis B develop chronic infections. About 25 to 50 percent of infected children between the ages of 1 and 5 develop chronic infections. However, only about 5 percent of people are first infected when adults develop chronic hepatitis B.6 How common is hepatitis B? Hepatitis B infection worldwide hepatitis B is more common in some parts of the world than in the United States. Although less than 0.5 percent of the U.S. population suffers from hepatitis B, 2 percent or more of the population is infected in areas such as Africa, Asia, and parts of the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and South America.7,8,9 Hepatitis B infections have been very common in some parts of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, where 8 percent or more of the population is infected.9 , Hepatitis B infection rates are now lower than they are , but infection rates are still higher in these areas than in the United States.8,9 Hepatitis B in the United States, approximately 862,000 people have chronic Asian American and African American hepatitis B disease rates than other U.S. racial and ethnic groups.10 Researchers estimate that about half of people living with chronic hepatitis B in Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.11 Chronic Hepatitis B is also more common among people born in other countries than among those born in the United States.7 The hepatitis B vaccine has been available since the 1980s and, in 1991, doctors began recommending that children in the United States receive the hepatitis B vaccine. The annual rate of acute hepatitis B infection dropped 88.5 percent between 1982 and 2015.12 In 2017, the annual number of hepatitis B infections rose in some states.13 Experts think the increase was related to increased use of injection drugs. Use of injection drugs increases hepatitis B infection. Who is more likely to get hepatitis B? People are more likely to get hepatitis B if born to a mother suffering from hepatitis B. The virus can spread from mother to child during birth. For this reason, people are more likely to suffer from hepatitis B if they are born in a part of the world where 2 percent or more of the population has hepatitis B infection born in the United States, do not receive the hepatitis B vaccine as a baby, and have parents born in areas where 8 percent or more of the population has hepatitis B infection People are also more likely to suffer from hepatitis B if they are in the United States , hepatitis B spreads among adults mainly through contact with infected blood through the skin, such as during the use of injection drugs, and through sexual contact.12 Should I be screened for hepatitis B? Screening is testing for the disease in people who have no symptoms. Doctors use blood tests for screening for hepatitis B. Many people with hepatitis B have no symptoms and do not know they are infected with hepatitis B. Screening tests can help doctors diagnose and treat hepatitis B, which can lower your chances of developing serious health problems. Your doctor may recommend screening for hepatitis B if you are 9.14 pregnant born in areas of the world where 2 percent or more of the population has hepatitis B infection, which includes Africa, Asia, and parts of the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and South America do not receive the hepatitis B vaccine as infants and have parents born in areas where 8 percent or more of the population has hepatitis B infection , which includes sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia is an HIV-positive injectable drug is men who have sex with men who have lived with or had sex with someone suffering from hepatitis B has an increased likelihood of infection due to other factors Your doctor may recommend screening for hepatitis B if you have an increased likelihood of infection. What are the complications of hepatitis B? Hepatitis B can cause serious complications. Early diagnosis and treatment can lower your chances of getting complications. Complications of acute hepatitis B can lead to acute liver failure, a condition in which the liver fails suddenly. People with acute liver failure may need a liver transplant. Complications of chronic hepatitis B can lead to cirrhosis, a condition in which scarring replaces healthy liver tissue and prevents your liver from working normally. Scarring also partially blocks blood flow through the liver. As the cirrhosis gets worse, the liver begins to fail. Liver failure, where your liver is badly damaged and stops working. Liver failure is also called late-stage liver disease. People with liver failure may need a liver transplant. liver cancer. Your doctor may suggest blood tests and ultrasounds or other types of imaging tests for liver cancer. Finding cancer at an early stage increases the likelihood of curing cancer. Reactivate hepatitis B In people who have had hepatitis B, B, the virus can be reactivated, or reactivated, at a later date. When hepatitis B is reactivated, it may begin to damage the liver and cause symptoms. Reactivated hepatitis B can lead to acute liver failure. People at risk for reactivated hepatitis B include those whose doctors can test for current or past hepatitis B infections in people at risk for reactivated hepatitis B. What are the symptoms of hepatitis B? Many people infected with hepatitis B have no symptoms. Some people with acute hepatitis B have symptoms 2 to 5 months after they come into contact with the virus.6 These symptoms may include Infants and children younger than age 5 typically having no symptoms of acute hepatitis B. Older children and adults are more likely to have symptoms.6 If you have chronic hepatitis B, you may not have symptoms until complications develop, which can be decades after you become infected. For this reason, hepatitis B screening is important, even if you have no symptoms. What causes hepatitis B? Hepatitis B virus causes hepatitis B. Hepatitis B virus is spread through contact with the blood, semen, or bodily fluids of an infected person. Contact can occur by being born to a mother with hepatitis B having condomless sex with an infected person sharing a drug needle or other drug ingredient with an infected person getting an accidental stick with a needle used in an infected person who is tattooed or stabbed with a device used in an infected person and is not properly sterilized , or cleaned in a way that destroys all viruses and other microbes that have contact with the blood or open wounds of an infected person using an infected person's razor, toothbrush, or nail clippers you cannot get hepatitis B from coughing or sneezing by an infected person drinking untreated water or untreated water that has not been boiled eating unspiced food or has not been cooked properly hugging an infected person shaking hands or holding hands with infected person sharing spoons, forks, and other cutlery sitting next to infected mothers suffering from hepatitis B can safely breastfeed their babies. If the baby receives immune globulin hepatitis B (HBIG) and starts receiving the hepatitis B vaccine to prevent hepatitis B infection shortly after birth, hepatitis B is unlikely to spread from mother to child through breastfeeding.15 How does the doctor diagnose hepatitis B? The doctor diagnoses hepatitis B based on your medical and family history, physical examinations, and blood tests. If you have hepatitis B, your doctor can do additional tests to check your liver. Your Doctor's medical and family history will ask about your symptoms and about which may make you more likely to get hepatitis B. Your doctor may ask if you have a family history of hepatitis B or liver cancer. Your doctor may also ask about other factors that can damage your liver, such as drinking alcohol. Physical exam During the physical exam, your doctor will check the liver damage such as changes in skin color swelling in the lower legs, feet, or ankle softness or swelling in your stomach What test does the doctor use to diagnose hepatitis B? Doctors use blood tests to diagnose hepatitis B. Your doctor can order additional tests to check for liver damage, find out how much liver damage you have, or rule out other causes of liver disease. Your doctor's blood test can order one or more blood tests to diagnose hepatitis B. A health care professional will take a blood sample from you and send the sample to the lab. Certain blood tests can show if you are infected with hepatitis B. If you are infected, your doctor may use another blood test to find out if the infection is acute or chronic whether you have an increased likelihood of liver damage whether the virus levels in your body are high or low whether you need treatment if you have chronic hepatitis B, your doctor will recommend testing your blood regularly because chronic hepatitis B may change over time. Even if the infection does not damage your liver when you are first diagnosed, it can damage your liver in the future. Your doctor will use a routine blood test to check for signs of liver damage, find out if you need treatment, or see how you respond to treatment. Blood tests can also show if you are immune to hepatitis B, which means you can't get hepatitis B. You may be immune if you get the vaccine or if you have had acute hepatitis B infection in the past and your body is struggling from infection. Your doctor can order one or more blood tests to diagnose hepatitis B. Additional tests If you've been suffering from chronic hepatitis B for a long time, you could have liver damage. Your doctor may recommend additional tests to find out if you have liver damage, how much liver damage you have, or to rule out other causes of liver disease. These tests can include a temporary elastography blood test, a special ultrasound biopsy of your liver, in which the doctor uses a needle to take a small piece of tissue from your liver The doctor usually uses a liver biopsy only if other tests do not provide sufficient

information about a person's liver damage or disease. Talk to your doctor about which test is best for you. How do doctors treat hepatitis B? Doctors usually do not treat hepatitis B unless it becomes chronic. Doctors can treat chronic hepatitis B with antiviral drugs that attack the virus. Not everyone with chronic hepatitis B needs treatment. If a blood test shows that hepatitis B can damage a person's liver, doctors can prescribe antiviral drugs to lower the likelihood of liver damage and complications, which you take through the mouth including the drug that the doctor can give as a shot is peginterferon alpha-2a (Pegasys). The length of treatment varies. Hepatitis B drugs can cause side effects. Talk to your doctor about the side effects of treatment. Tell your doctor before taking another prescription or over-the-counter medication. For safety You should also talk to your doctor before using dietary supplements, such as vitamins, or complementary or alternative medicines or medical practices. How do doctors treat complications of hepatitis B? If chronic hepatitis B causes cirrhosis, you should see a doctor who specializes in liver disease. Doctors can treat health problems associated with cirrhosis with medications, minor medical procedures, and surgery. If you have cirrhosis, you have an increased likelihood of liver cancer. Your doctor can order blood tests and ultrasounds or other types of imaging tests to check for liver cancer. If chronic hepatitis B causes liver failure or liver cancer, you may need a liver transplant. How can I protect myself from hepatitis B infection? You can protect yourself from hepatitis B by getting the hepatitis B vaccine. If you do not already have a vaccine, you can take steps to reduce the likelihood of your infection. Hepatitis B Vaccine The hepatitis B vaccine has been available since the 1980s and should be given to newborns, children, and adolescents in the United States. Adults who are more likely to be infected with hepatitis B or who have chronic liver disease should also get the vaccine. The hepatitis B vaccine is safe for pregnant women. Doctors most often give hepatitis B vaccine in three shots for 6 months. You have to get all three shots to be fully protected. In some cases, doctors may recommend different amounts or times of vaccine shots. If you are traveling to countries where hepatitis B is common and you have not received the hepatitis B vaccine, talk to your doctor and try to get all the shots before you go. If you don't have time to get all the shots before you travel, get as many as you can. Even one shot might give you some protection against viruses. The hepatitis B vaccine should be given to newborns, children, and adolescents in the United States. Reduce the likelihood of infection You can reduce the likelihood of hepatitis B infection by not sharing drug needles or other drug materials wearing gloves if you have to touch someone else's blood or open wounds ensuring tattoo artists or body piercings use sterile tools not to hand out personal items, such as toothbrushes, razors, or nail clippers using latex condoms or polyurethane during sex Prevent infection after contact with the virus If you think you have been in contact with the virus hepatitis B, see your doctor immediately. Doctors usually recommend a dose of the hepatitis B vaccine to prevent infection. In some cases, doctors may also recommend a drug called immune globulin hepatitis B (HBIG) to help prevent infection. You should get a dose of the vaccine and, if necessary, HBIG shortly after with a virus, preferably within 24 hours. How do I prevent the spread of hepatitis B to others? If you have hepatitis B, follow the steps above to avoid the spread of infection. Your sex partner should get a hepatitis B test and, if they are not infected, get hepatitis B B You can protect others from being infected by telling your doctor, dentist, and other health care professionals that you have hepatitis B. Do not donate blood or blood products, semen, organs, or tissues. Prevent hepatitis B infection in newborns If you are pregnant and suffering from hepatitis B, talk to your doctor about lowering the risk the infection will spread to your baby. Your doctor will check your virus levels during pregnancy. If the level of the virus is high, your doctor may recommend treatment during pregnancy to lower levels of the virus and reduce the likelihood that hepatitis B will spread to your baby. Your doctor can refer you to a liver specialist to see if you need hepatitis B treatment and check for liver damage. When it's time to give birth, tell the doctors and staff who gave birth to your baby that you have hepatitis B. A health care professional should give your baby the hepatitis B and HBIG vaccines right after birth. Vaccines and HBIG will greatly reduce your baby's chances of getting an infection. If you are pregnant and suffering from hepatitis B, your baby should receive the hepatitis B and HBIG vaccines right after birth. Eat, diet, and nutrition for hepatitis B If you have hepatitis B, you should eat a balanced and healthy diet. Obesity can increase the likelihood of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), and NAFLD can increase liver damage in people suffering from hepatitis B. Talk to your doctor about eating healthily and maintaining a healthy weight. You should also avoid alcohol as it can cause more liver damage. Clinical Trials for Hepatitis B NIDDK conduct and support clinical trials in many diseases and conditions, including liver disease. These trials are looking for new ways to prevent, detect, or treat diseases and improve quality of life. What are clinical trials for hepatitis B? Clinical trials — and other types of clinical studies — are part of medical research and involve people like you. When you voluntarily take part in clinical studies, you help doctors and researchers learn more about the disease and improve health care for people in the future. Researchers are studying many aspects of hepatitis B, such as the development of hepatitis B and the long-term results of new treatments for hepatitis B prevention from reactivated or worsening hepatitis B in people receiving cancer treatment Find out if a clinical study is right for you. What clinical studies for hepatitis B are looking for participants? You can see a filtered list of clinical studies on hepatitis B that are federally funded, opened, and recruited in www.ClinicalTrials.gov. You can expand or narrow the list to include clinical studies from industry, universities, and individuals; however, the NIH did not review this study can't make sure they're safe. Always talk to your healthcare provider before you participate in clinical studies. How does NIDDK and NIH-funded research advance the understanding of hepatitis B? NIDDK and NIH have supported many research to learn more about hepatitis B, including the NIDDK Hepatitis B Research Network (HBRN). HBRN, a network of 28 clinical sites across the United States and Canada, is studying how hepatitis B affects children and adults and exploring new approaches to diagnosis and treatment. References [6] Hepatitis B questions and answers for health professionals. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed 23 October 2019. Retrieved 24 October 2019. www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/hbvfaq.htm. [7] Patel EU, Thio CL, Boon D, Thomas DL, Tobian AAR. Prevalence of hepatitis B and hepatitis D virus infections in the United States, 2011–2016. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. 2019. [Epub ahead of print] doi: 10.1093/cid/ciz001 [8] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 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