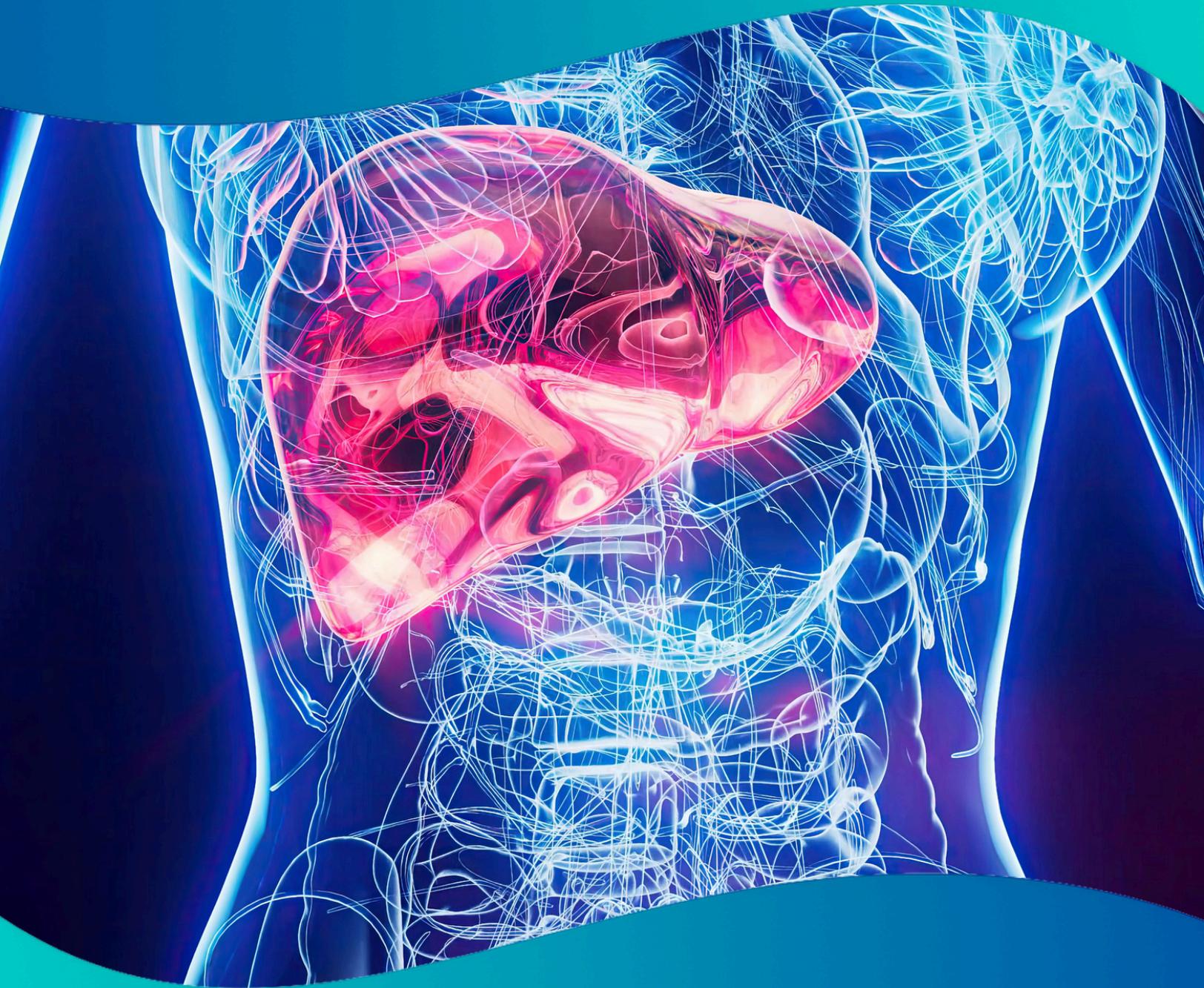
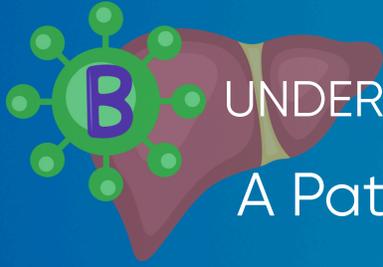


# UNDERSTANDING HEPATITIS B



A Patient Guide





## UNDERSTANDING HEPATITIS B

### A Patient Guide

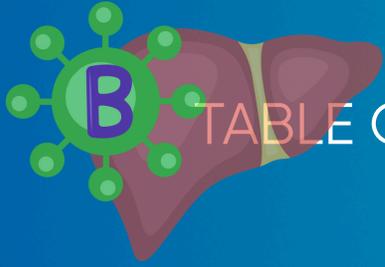


This booklet will help you learn about hepatitis B. You will find out what causes it, how it affects your body, how it is treated, and what you can do to protect your liver and stay healthy.

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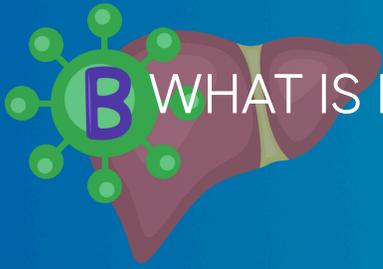


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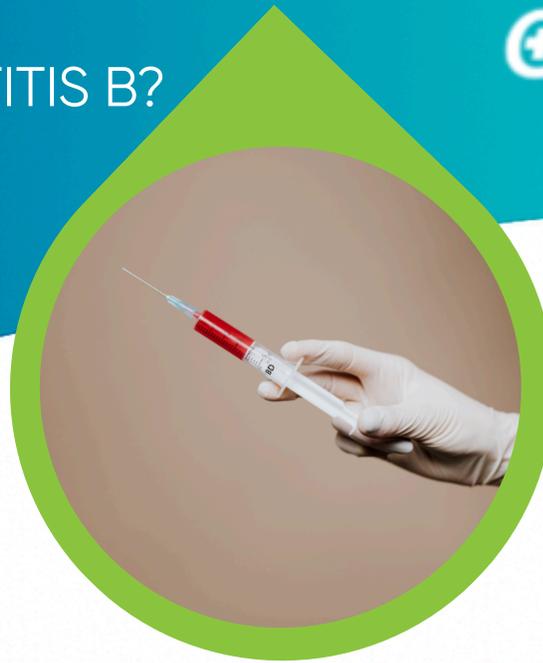


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## WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?



**Hepatitis B** is a viral infection that attacks the liver. The hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause both short-term (acute) and long-term (chronic) illness.

The liver is one of your body's most important organs. It filters blood, fights infections, stores energy, and helps digest food. When the hepatitis B virus infects the liver, it causes inflammation that can damage liver cells over time.

Think of it this way: Your liver is like a filter for your body. Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks this filter, making it harder for your liver to do its job. Without treatment, the virus can slowly damage the liver over many years.

### Key Terms to Know

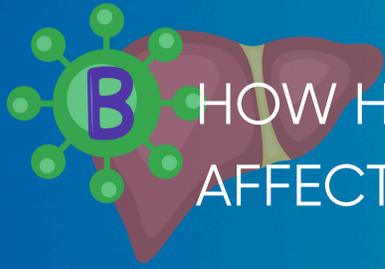
**Hepatitis:** Inflammation of the liver. "Hepa" means liver, and "itis" means inflammation.

**Hepatitis B Virus (HBV):** The virus that causes hepatitis B infection.

**Chronic:** A long-lasting infection (more than 6 months) that the body cannot clear on its own.

#### References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Hepatitis B FAQs." CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/>
2. World Health Organization. "Hepatitis B." WHO.int. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hepatitis-b>
3. American Liver Foundation. "Hepatitis B." [liverfoundation.org](http://liverfoundation.org).



## HOW HEPATITIS B AFFECTS THE LIVER



When the hepatitis B virus enters your body, it travels to the liver and starts making copies of itself. Your immune system tries to fight the virus, and this battle causes inflammation.

### What Your Liver Does

- Filters toxins from your blood
- Makes proteins that help blood clot
- Produces bile to help digest fats
- Stores vitamins, minerals, and sugar for energy
- Fights infections

### How HBV Damages the Liver

Over time, chronic hepatitis B can lead to:

**Fibrosis:** Scar tissue begins to form in the liver.

**Cirrhosis:** Severe scarring that prevents the liver from working properly.

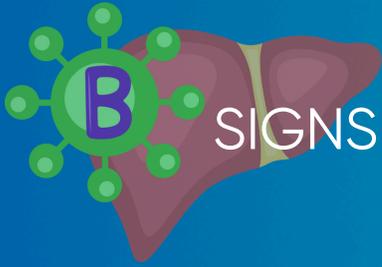
**Liver Cancer:** People with chronic HBV have a higher risk of liver cancer.

**Liver Failure:** The liver can no longer do its job. A transplant may be needed.

**Important:** Not everyone with chronic hepatitis B will develop these problems. Treatment and regular monitoring can help protect your liver.

#### References:

1. American Liver Foundation. "How the Liver Works." [liverfoundation.org](http://liverfoundation.org).
2. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Liver Damage." [hepb.org](http://hepb.org).



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



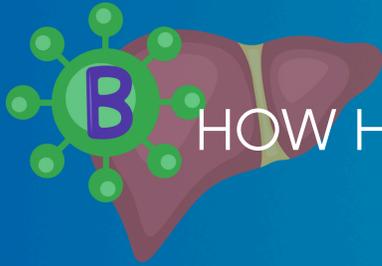
Many people with hepatitis B have no symptoms, especially in the early stages. This is why it's called a "silent" infection.

Acute Hepatitis B Symptoms	(May appear 2-5 months after infection) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fatigue (feeling very tired)</li><li>• Loss of appetite</li><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Stomach pain (especially upper right side)</li><li>• Fever</li><li>• Dark urine (tea or cola colored)</li><li>• Clay-colored bowel movements</li><li>• Joint pain</li><li>• Jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes)</li></ul>
Chronic Hepatitis B	Many people with chronic hepatitis B feel fine for years. Symptoms may not appear until the liver is damaged. Regular monitoring is important even if you feel well.
Signs of Liver Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swelling in the legs or abdomen</li><li>• Easy bruising or bleeding</li><li>• Confusion or difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Severe fatigue</li><li>• Spider-like blood vessels on the skin</li></ul>

**Important:** You can spread hepatitis B to others even if you have no symptoms.

References:

1. CDC. "Hepatitis B - Symptoms." CDC.gov.
2. Mayo Clinic. "Hepatitis B - Symptoms and Causes." MayoClinic.org.



# HOW HEPATITIS B SPREADS



Hepatitis B spreads through contact with infected blood, semen, or other body fluids.

## Common Ways HBV Spreads

- From mother to baby during childbirth
- Unprotected sex with an infected person
- Sharing needles, syringes, or drug equipment
- Sharing razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers
- Needlestick injuries (healthcare workers)
- Unsterile tattoo or piercing equipment

## HBV Does NOT Spread Through

- Coughing or sneezing
- Hugging or holding hands
- Sharing food or drinks
- Breastfeeding (if baby is vaccinated)
- Kissing on the cheek
- Toilet seats

## Who Should Be Tested?

- People born in countries where HBV is common
- People whose parents were born in high-risk areas
- Anyone who has injected drugs
- People with multiple sex partners
- Healthcare and public safety workers
- Pregnant women
- People with HIV or hepatitis C

**Prevention:** The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective. It is recommended for all infants, children, and at-risk adults.

### References:

1. CDC. "Hepatitis B - Transmission." CDC.gov.
2. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Transmission." hep.org.



## How is Hepatitis B Diagnosed?

Hepatitis B is diagnosed with blood tests:

### Hepatitis B Panel (Blood Test)

Three tests are usually done together:

#### HBsAg (Hepatitis B Surface Antigen)

Positive = You have hepatitis B infection (acute or chronic)

#### Anti-HBs (Hepatitis B Surface Antibody)

Positive = You are protected (from vaccine or past infection)

#### Anti-HBc (Hepatitis B Core Antibody)

Positive = You have been exposed to HBV at some point

### Additional Tests for Chronic HBV

**HBV DNA (Viral Load):** Measures how much virus is in your blood

**Liver Function Tests (LFTs):** Check how well your liver is working (ALT, AST)

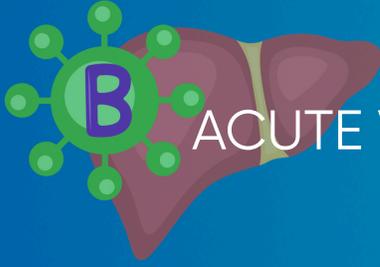
**HBeAg and Anti-HBe:** Help determine the phase of infection

### Liver Assessment

- FibroScan or ultrasound to check for liver damage
- Liver biopsy (sometimes) for detailed assessment
- AFP test to screen for liver cancer

#### References:

1. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Blood Tests." [hepb.org](http://hepb.org).
2. CDC. "Interpretation of Hepatitis B Tests." [CDC.gov](http://CDC.gov).



# ACUTE VS. CHRONIC HEPATITIS B



## Acute Hepatitis B

A short-term infection that occurs within 6 months of exposure.

- Most healthy adults (90%) clear the virus on their own
- May cause symptoms or may have no symptoms
- Usually does not require treatment
- After recovery, you are immune for life

## Chronic Hepatitis B

A long-term infection that lasts more than 6 months.

- The body cannot clear the virus
- Can lead to serious liver problems over time
- May require lifelong monitoring or treatment
- Risk of chronic infection depends on age at infection

## Risk of Becoming Chronic

- Infants infected at birth: 90% become chronic
- Children (1-5 years): 25-50% become chronic
- Healthy adults: Only 5-10% become chronic

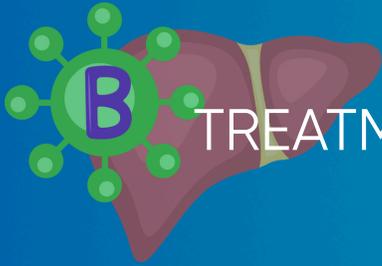
## Phases of Chronic Hepatitis B

Chronic HBV goes through different phases. Your doctor monitors you to determine when treatment is needed.

**Important:** Even if you feel fine, you still need regular monitoring. The virus can become more active at any time.

### References:

1. CDC. "Hepatitis B - Acute vs. Chronic." CDC.gov.
2. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Chronic Hepatitis B." hep.org.



## TREATMENT OPTIONS



Not everyone with chronic hepatitis B needs treatment right away. Your doctor will decide based on your viral load, liver health, and other factors.

### Goals of Treatment

- Suppress the virus (lower viral load)
- Prevent liver damage
- Reduce risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer
- Improve quality of life

ANTIVIRAL MEDICATIONS	Pills taken daily to suppress the virus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entecavir (Baraclude)</li><li>• Tenofovir disoproxil (Viread)</li><li>• Tenofovir alafenamide (Vemlidy)</li></ul> These medications are very effective and have few side effects. Most people take them long-term or for life.
INTERFERON THERAPY	Injections that boost the immune system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peginterferon alfa-2a (Pegasys)</li><li>• Given for a set time (usually 48 weeks)</li><li>• More side effects but may lead to long-term remission</li></ul>

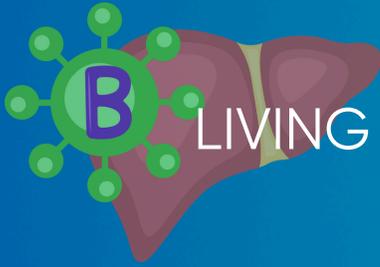
### Monitoring Without Treatment

If you don't need treatment yet, you will still have regular check-ups including:

- Blood tests every 6-12 months
- Liver ultrasound every 6 months (for liver cancer screening)

#### References:

1. American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases. "HBV Treatment Guidelines." [aasld.org](http://aasld.org).
2. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Treatment." [hepb.org](http://hepb.org).



## LIVING WITH HEPATITIS B



Many people with hepatitis B live long, healthy lives. Here's what you can do:

### Protect Others

- Tell sex partners, household members, and healthcare providers
- Make sure close contacts are vaccinated
- Use condoms during sex
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers
- Cover open wounds
- Don't donate blood, organs, or sperm

### Take Care of Your Liver

- Avoid alcohol or limit it greatly
- Talk to your doctor before taking any medications, vitamins, or supplements
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A
- Maintain a healthy weight

### Stay Healthy

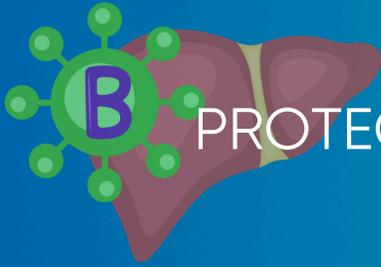
- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of vegetables
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep
- Manage stress
- Keep all doctor appointments

### Emotional Support

- It's normal to feel worried or stressed
- Join a support group
- Talk to a counselor if needed
- Educate yourself about your condition

#### References:

1. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Living with Hepatitis B." [hepb.org](http://hepb.org).



## PROTECTING YOUR LIVER



Your liver is already working hard to fight the virus. Help protect it:

### Avoid Alcohol

- Alcohol damages the liver
- Combined with hepatitis B, it speeds up liver damage
- Even small amounts can be harmful
- Best to avoid alcohol completely

### Be Careful with Medications

Many medications are processed by the liver. Always ask your doctor before taking:

- Over-the-counter pain relievers (especially acetaminophen/Tylenol)
- Herbal supplements
- Vitamins in high doses
- New prescription medications

### Eat a Liver-Friendly Diet

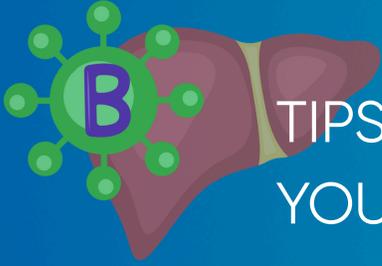
- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean protein
- Limit fatty, fried, and processed foods
- Limit sugar and salt
- Stay hydrated with water

### Get Regular Screening

- Liver ultrasound every 6 months (for liver cancer)
- Blood tests as recommended by your doctor
- Early detection of problems leads to better outcomes

#### References:

1. American Liver Foundation. "Liver Health." [liverfoundation.org](http://liverfoundation.org).



## TIPS FOR TAKING YOUR MEDICATION



### DO:

- Take your medication every day at the same time
- Set a daily alarm or use a pill box
- Keep all follow-up appointments
- Tell your doctor about all medications you take
- Refill prescriptions before you run out
- Store medication as directed
- Report any side effects to your doctor

### Why Adherence Matters

- Missing doses can cause the virus to become resistant
- Resistant virus is harder to treat
- Consistent treatment protects your liver

### If You Miss a Dose

- Take it as soon as you remember
- If it's almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose
- Never double up



### DON'T:

- Stop taking medication without talking to your doctor
- Skip doses
- Share your medication with others
- Take more than prescribed
- Drink alcohol while on treatment

**Common Side Effects:** Headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness. Most are mild. Contact your doctor if side effects are bothersome.

#### References:

1. Hepatitis B Foundation. "Taking Your Medication." [hepb.org](http://hepb.org).



## WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR



### ⚠️ CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IF:

- Vomiting blood or blood in stool
- Severe abdominal pain
- Confusion or difficulty staying awake
- Very swollen abdomen
- Difficulty breathing

### ⚠️ CALL YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE IF:

- Yellowing of skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Dark urine
- Unusual fatigue that doesn't improve
- Loss of appetite lasting more than a few days
- Nausea or vomiting
- Swelling in legs or ankles
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Fever
- Itchy skin
- Side effects from medication
- Questions about your treatment

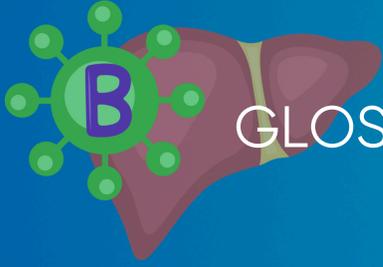


*Keep Your Follow-Up Appointments!*

*Regular monitoring can catch problems early when they're easier to treat*

References:

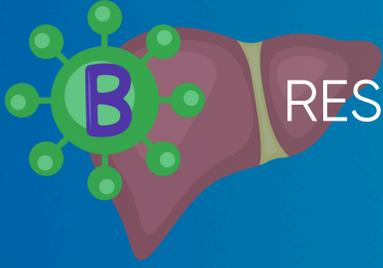
1. American Liver Foundation. "When to Seek Help." [liverfoundation.org](http://liverfoundation.org).



## GLOSSARY



ACUTE	Short-term infection (less than 6 months)
ALT/AST	Liver enzymes measured in blood tests
ANTIVIRAL	Medication that fights viruses
CHRONIC	Long-term infection (more than 6 months)
CIRRHOSIS	Severe scarring of the liver
FIBROSIS	Mild to moderate scarring of the liver
HBsAg	Hepatitis B surface antigen (shows active infection)
HBV	Hepatitis B virus
HBV DNA	Viral load - amount of virus in the blood
HEPATITIS	Inflammation of the liver
IMMUNE	Protected against infection
JAUNDICE	Yellowing of skin and eyes
LIVER FUNCTION TESTS	Blood tests that check liver health
VIRAL LOAD	Amount of virus in the blood



## Learn More:

- Hepatitis B Foundation: [hepb.org](http://hepb.org)
- American Liver Foundation: [liverfoundation.org](http://liverfoundation.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://cdc.gov/hepatitis)
- World Hepatitis Alliance: [worldhepatitisalliance.org](http://worldhepatitisalliance.org)
- Mayo Clinic - Hepatitis B: [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)
- MedlinePlus - Hepatitis B: [medlineplus.gov/hepatitisb.html](http://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisb.html)
- Immunization Action Coalition: [immunize.org](http://immunize.org)



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Medical Review: Julia Kravtsova, PharmD, Head Patient Navigator  
Content: Paola Larrabure, Pharma Content Manager