



The Sexual Health Clinic aims to use language that everyone can relate to. People use different words to describe their bodies. This document uses medical terms such as vagina and breast to describe genitals, but some people may use other terms such as private parts, front hole, or chest. We acknowledge and respect that people use words that they are comfortable with.

HEPATITIS B

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. The infection can be prevented with vaccination. It is transmitted by sexual contact or blood contact. Many people who live with hepatitis B infection don't have symptoms. Without testing or treatment, the liver can become damaged and cause liver diseases.

What are the symptoms?

Most people don't have symptoms, or only mild symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)
- Dark urine, pale stools
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, poor appetite

How does someone get Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is passed through blood, semen, pre-ejaculate fluids, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids and saliva from someone who has the virus. Transmission can happen through:

- Anal, oral, vaginal sex or sharing sex toys.
- Transmission to the infant during pregnancy or childbirth
- Sharing equipment to inject, snort or smoke drugs such as needles, syringes, cookers, filters stems, bills and straws.
- Tattoos, body piercing or modifications, acupuncture, manicures, or pedicures with equipment that has not been sterilized (cleaned properly).
- Sharing personal hygiene supplies such as razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers
- Medical or surgical procedures, such as with equipment that has not been sterilized (cleaned properly)

How do I get tested for hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is diagnosed with a blood test. This blood test can reveal if an individual currently has hepatitis B (active infection), has had hepatitis B in the past (resolved infection) or has previously received the vaccine. Most tests are accurate within 4 weeks of exposure, but some people may take as long as 3 to 6 months to test positive. You may be encouraged to return for repeat testing.

What happens if I have a positive hepatitis B result?

Most people clear the virus without treatment within 6 months and develop lifelong immunity (cannot get the infection again). However, people who cannot clear the virus within 6 months will develop chronic hepatitis B and can transmit the infection even when they don't have symptoms. Children and infants are at particular risk of developing a chronic infection.

- Newborns at risk can receive an immune globulin injection and vaccine at birth.
- You may be referred to a specialist for follow-up. For chronic infections, treatment is available to help prevent further damage to the liver.
- Your healthcare provider or a public health nurse will help you notify potential contacts to encourage them to be tested for hepatitis B, assess their immune status and provide vaccination if required. Free vaccination is offered by Ottawa Public Health.

How do I reduce my risks?

- Use an internal or external condom every time you have vaginal or anal sex.
- Use an external condom or dental dam every time you have oral sex.
- Use water-based or silicone-based lubricants.
- If you share sex toys, cover the toy with a condom and clean after each use.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections regularly.
- Use new equipment every time you inject, including needles, syringes, cookers, filters and water.
- Never share drug equipment with anyone, including your sex partners.
- Access Needle and Syringe Programs or Supervised Consumption Services for new equipment and harm reduction services.

For more information:

- Canadian Liver Foundation - www.liver.ca, or call 1-800-563-5483
- Health Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- CATIE - www.catie.ca (Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information) or call their toll-free telephone line at 1-800-236-1638

Sexual Health Clinic

179 Clarence Street
613-234-4641 | ATS : 613-580-9656

The Site Harm Reduction Program

Site Office (Needle & Syringe and Supervised Consumption Services)

179 Clarence Street, 9am-5pm daily
613-580-2424 ext. 29047

Site Van (Mobile harm reduction services)

5pm-11:30pm daily
613-232-3232 (collect calls accepted)