

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B vaccination is the most effective way to prevent infection. The vaccine is given as 3 injections over a period of six months. People of all age groups can take it. After the vaccination course is completed it is important to do a blood test to check whether it is effective or not. This form of blood test detects the level of protective antibodies in the blood. In India, all children are being vaccinated at birth as per the Government's Universal Immunization Programme.

HEPATITIS B - FACTS AT A GLANCE

- Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- Adults get Hepatitis B through infected blood transfusion, contaminated needles and sexual transmission from a Hepatitis B infected partner

- Children usually get Hepatitis B from their mother during child birth
- About 1 in 50 Indians are infected with the virus
- Most people with Hepatitis B have no symptoms
- Hepatitis B can be easily diagnosed by a simple blood test
- There are effective medications to treat the disease
- Untreated Hepatitis B can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure.
- Vaccination is the best way to prevent HBV.



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DEPARTMENTS

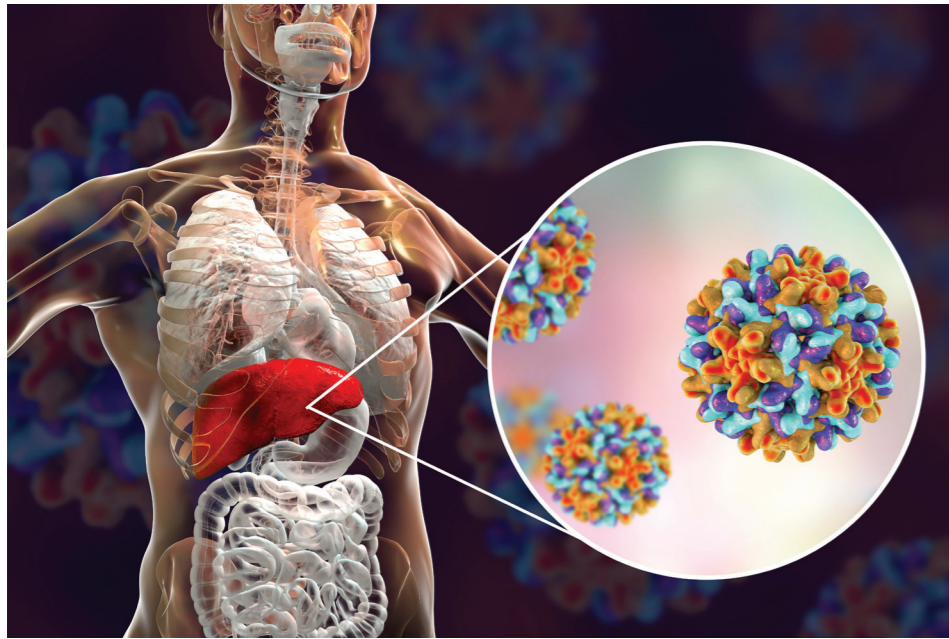
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KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS B



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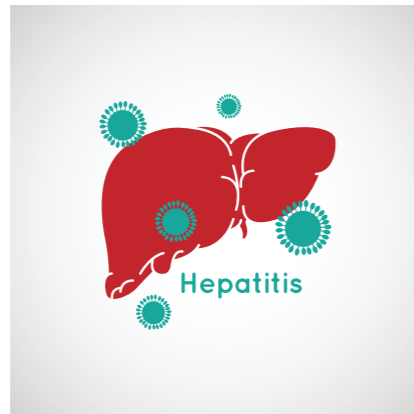
WHY IS LIVER IMPORTANT?

The largest internal organ in the body, the liver is absolutely vital for survival. It has a lot of vital functions:

- Produces bile, a mixture of chemicals, which aids digestion.
- Helps break down food to turn it into energy.
- Removes harmful substances from the blood, helping fight infection.
- Makes chemicals that are important for blood clotting.
- Stores iron, vitamins and other essential substances.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). Hepatitis B causes inflammation and swelling of the liver (acute hepatitis) and prevents it from working well. It may persist in the liver causing chronic



hepatitis, and over many years can lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, and liver failure.

HOW DOES ONE GET HEPATITIS B?

The Hepatitis B virus is spread by contact with blood or other infectious body fluids. Adults get Hepatitis B through

infected blood transfusion, contaminated needles and sexual transmission from a Hepatitis B infected partner. Children usually get Hepatitis B from their mother during child birth. Hepatitis B virus is not spread by air, food, or water.

WHO IS AT RISK OF HAVING HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is very common. About 2 to 3 percent of people in Asia have chronic Hepatitis B infection. Certain practices like reuse of needles and syringes in hospitals and clinics in the past, tattooing using unclean and contaminated needles, unregulated and unsafe blood transfusion has increased the risk of transmission of Hepatitis B. In view of the high prevalence of Hepatitis B, it is recommended that every one should get tested for hepatitis B infection by doing a simple blood test.

WHAT ARE THE PHASES AND SYMPTOMS OF HEPATITIS B INFECTION?

Infection with HBV can cause both short-term (acute) disease and long-term (chronic) disease. Patients with acute HBV infections get symptoms such as loss of appetite, weakness, nausea,

vomiting, abdominal pain, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), and dark urine. The acute phase usually lasts 2-8 weeks and most patients recover completely. Few individuals develop a severe form of acute infection and can die as a result of liver failure. Some adults and almost all children who get infected during birth go on to develop chronic HBV infection. This individual often does not feel sick for many years. With progression of disease, cirrhosis and liver failure develops and patients develop swelling of the legs (edema), fluid in the abdomen (ascites), vomiting of blood, and mental confusion.

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B damages the liver slowly over a period of 20-30 years. About 20 percent of patients with untreated Hepatitis B, progress to liver cirrhosis which is scarring of the liver. Once cirrhosis develops, patients are at a risk of developing liver failure.

ARE PATIENTS WITH HEPATITIS B AT RISK OF DEVELOPING LIVER CANCER?

One in 20 people with Hepatitis B will develop liver cancer. The risk is more

in patients with chronic Hepatitis B and cirrhosis. Risk also depends on the amount of virus in the blood. Patients with chronic Hepatitis B should regularly do ultrasound scans to detect small liver cancers at an early stage. Small cancers can be effectively treated.

HOW IS HEPATITIS B DIAGNOSED?

Hepatitis B is easily diagnosed by a simple blood test. It is also possible to know the amount of Hepatitis B virus in the blood by doing a special blood test called Hepatitis B virus DNA PCR. Knowing the amount of virus in the blood is important to decide the need for treatment and to monitor the effect of treatment.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE DIAGNOSED WITH HEPATITIS B?

- Talk to your doctor regarding need for treatment
- Do a blood test to determine the amount of virus in the blood (Hepatitis B virus DNA PCR)

- Take only the medications recommended by your doctor
- Do not resort to herbal drugs
- Avoid alcohol completely
- Ask all your family members including spouse, siblings and children to get tested for Hepatitis B

HOW IS HEPATITIS B TREATED?

If you have HBV, it is important to talk to your doctor about treatment options. Most patients who develop acute Hepatitis B infection recover on their own. Your doctor will recommend rest, drinking lots of fluids, eating a healthy diet and avoiding alcohol. Patients with chronic Hepatitis B infection and those with Hepatitis B related cirrhosis need specific medicines which act against the Hepatitis B virus. Treatment depends upon the amount of Hepatitis B virus in your blood. Some commonly used medicines are Entecavir and Tenofovir. Occasionally weekly injections of Interferon may be required for 6 to 12 months.