



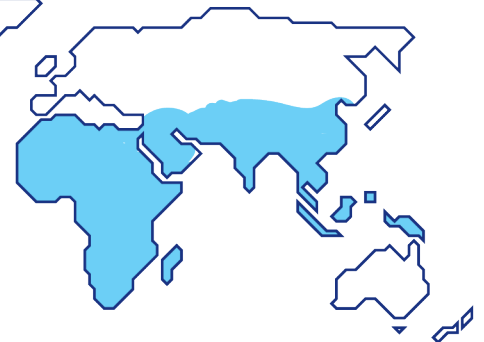
## What

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). The virus is transmitted through bodily fluids and can survive outside the body for at least 7 days. After infection, the virus travels to the liver via the bloodstream. This may lead to symptoms during the acute phase in about 40% of adults. Your immune system may clear the virus, or it may not. In a minority of adults, the infection leads to chronic infection, which can cause liver damage and cancer. In the majority of people, the infection results in lifelong immunity.



## Who

Risk factors for acquiring the infection include close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals (this includes sexual contact, healthcare exposures, sharing of used needles or sharp instruments, and close household contacts). Babies born to HBV-positive mothers are also at increased risk.

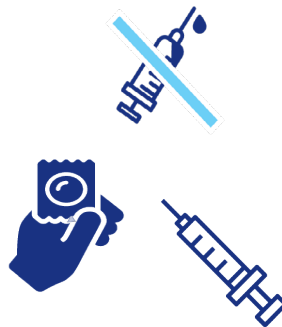


## Where and when

Hepatitis B occurs worldwide, but it is more common in most African regions, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Meso- and South America. The global distribution of HBV varies, and the main routes of transmission depend on the local situation. In areas with a high prevalence of active infections, mother-to-child transmission is more common. In other settings, unprotected sexual intercourse and intravenous drug use with needle sharing are more common routes of transmission.

## Prevention

Vaccination prior to exposure is the best way to prevent infection. Universal vaccination of newborns is recommended in most countries. Vaccination should also be provided to individuals who are not immune and are at high risk of exposure to the hepatitis B virus. If you may have been exposed and are not immune, you may benefit from specific antibodies if given within 24 hours after exposure. This should always be discussed with a physician.



## Treatment

The treatment of acute infection is mainly supportive. Patients with a severe or prolonged course are treated with antiviral therapy until it is confirmed that the patient has cleared the virus. The management of chronic infection is complex and beyond the scope of this factsheet.

## Symptoms

In the case of acute infection, the incubation period lasts one to six months (usually 2-3 months). Symptoms of acute infection may include loss of appetite, nausea, jaundice, and right upper quadrant discomfort. During the chronic phase, manifestations range from a carrier state with no symptoms to chronic inflammation of the liver, with complications such as liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and death.



## In case of infection

For most people, vaccination against the hepatitis B virus provides lifelong protection. Fulminant liver failure in cases of acute infection is rare. The rate of progression from acute to chronic infection is primarily determined by the age at infection. Approximately 5% of infected adults become chronic carriers, who may then develop further complications due to the virus.