

# HEPATITIS B: ARE YOU AT RISK?

KNOW

HEPATITIS B™

## Information for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver disease. It is caused by the Hepatitis B virus. For some people who get Hepatitis B, the virus stays in the body, causing a lifelong illness. Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems over time. These problems can include liver cancer and liver failure.

### How is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is spread when someone comes in contact with blood from a person who has the disease. Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth or from a family member to young children. Most people living with Hepatitis B got infected as infants or young children.

Hepatitis B is not a genetic disease. People also do not get Hepatitis B from sharing meals, bowls or utensils with someone who has the disease. Hepatitis B is not spread through breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.



If you or your parents were born in Hawaii or the Pacific Islands, talk to your doctor about getting tested for Hepatitis B.

### How common is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is very common in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, as well as many parts of Asia. Approximately 1 in 12 Asian Americans, which includes Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, are living with Hepatitis B. Unfortunately, most people do not know they are infected.

### What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Most people who have Hepatitis B do not know they have it. The disease does not always cause symptoms. Hepatitis B can stay hidden in the body. Many people can live with Hepatitis B for many years without feeling sick. Still, liver damage from the disease can take place during this time.

### How serious is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B can become very serious. For some people, Hepatitis B can cause liver damage, and can even lead to liver failure or cancer.

### How do people know if they have Hepatitis B?

A Hepatitis B test lets people know if they have it. This is a simple blood test that takes only a little bit of blood from a person's arm. Doctors do not always do this test, so it is important to ask to be tested.

### Who should be tested for Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B testing is recommended for:

- People born in a region of the world where Hepatitis B is common. This includes Hawaii, the Pacific Islands and Asia.
- People with a parent born in a region of the world where Hepatitis B is common.
- People who live with someone who has Hepatitis B.

### Why should people be tested for Hepatitis B?

Getting tested lets a person know if he or she has Hepatitis B. There are treatments available for Hepatitis B that can help prevent serious liver damage. People who find out they have Hepatitis B can also keep other family members healthy. This is why women are always tested for Hepatitis B when they are pregnant. Family members who have never had Hepatitis B can get a vaccine to protect them from getting it. Hepatitis B test results will be kept confidential.

### How is Hepatitis B treated?

People who have hepatitis B should see a doctor who is very knowledgeable about the disease. The doctor can help manage and monitor the disease. The doctor can give medicines that will slow down liver damage.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
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