

Take Care Of Your Liver !

There are a number of things you can do to stay healthy:

- Limit or avoid alcohol
- Keep yourself within a healthy weight range by eating a healthy, well balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, while avoiding fatty foods
- Discuss the use of herbal or alternative medicines with a doctor as some may affect your liver
- Ensure you get regular blood tests (usually 6 monthly) to monitor your liver. Individuals who continue with regular monitoring have improved health outcomes

Vaccination

Vaccination is very effective at preventing hepatitis B. It is recommended for a number of at risk groups:

- All infants born to mothers with hepatitis B (to be given directly after birth and to include hepatitis B immunoglobulin)
- All other infants
- Susceptible household and sexual contacts of HBV individuals
- Health care workers who come into contact with blood or body fluids

The vaccination consists of a series of three injections. The 2nd dose is given one month after the first, and the 3rd is given six months later.

Support for people living with chronic hepatitis B

The Hepatitis Foundation (NZ) has set up a confidential national follow-up and support programme designed to provide advice and support to those living with hepatitis B.

This programme is optional and includes the offer of information on lifestyle and treatment; contact with a community hepatitis nurse and blood tests as necessary.

If you would like to enrol on this programme or require further information please phone or email The Hepatitis Foundation.



The Hepatitis Foundation (NZ)

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Understanding Chronic Hepatitis B

A simple guide

The Hepatitis Foundation
of
New Zealand

For information and support:

Free-phone: 0800 33 20 10
www.hepfoundation.org.nz



What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. This inflammation may be caused by a viral infection such as hepatitis B. The hepatitis B virus enters the body and infects the liver (host organ). In response the immune system attacks the infected liver cells causing damage.

Is hepatitis B common?

Worldwide there are 400 million people chronically infected and approximately 90 000 of these are New Zealanders.

Chronic hepatitis B (CHB)

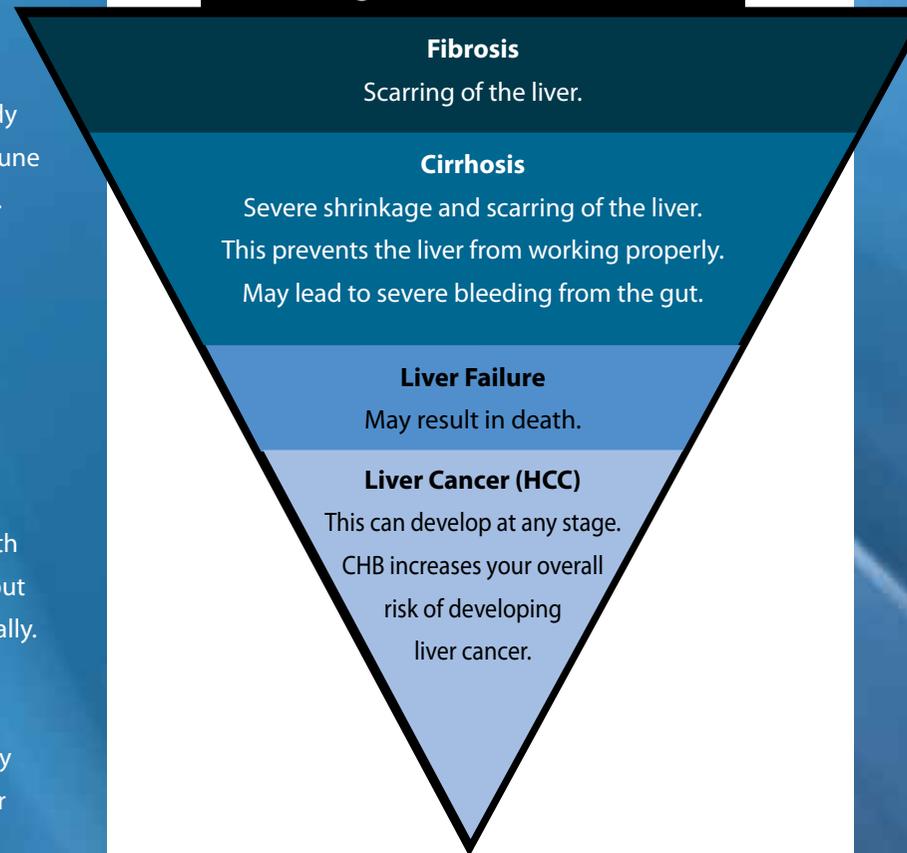
Most people contract the hepatitis B virus (HBV) at birth or early childhood. This is usually a lifelong infection, but each year 1% of these people will clear the virus naturally.

90% of those infected in adulthood will clear the virus on their own, with the remainder becoming chronically infected (positive hepatitis B blood test result for longer than 6 months).

Those who develop CHB are at risk of developing progressive liver disease i.e. inflammation, scarring and in some cases liver cancer.

If you have a close family member with CHB and they have been diagnosed with liver cancer, you will require six monthly liver ultrasounds as you have a higher risk of developing liver cancer.

Stages of Liver Disease



Is there a cure for hepatitis B?

Unfortunately there is no cure, however there are medications available which help stop HBV from multiplying and causing further damage to the liver.

These medications are only required when the virus is active. Your specialist will decide if and when you require treatment. Some people will never require treatment. Regular blood tests are able to detect active liver disease.

How do you become infected?

HBV is spread through contact with blood or bodily fluids. The main ways HBV can be transmitted are: infected mothers to their babies, unprotected sexual contact, injecting drug-use or tattooing, while using unsterile equipment.

Can I have children?

There is no reason why you cannot have children. If you are pregnant and have HBV your baby will require protection with HB Immunoglobulin & vaccination directly after the birth, 95% effective. In some cases when the mother has high amounts of HBV, anti-viral treatment is recommended during the last trimester to further reduce the risk of transmission to the baby.

How to prevent infecting others?

- Cover any open cuts or sores
- Clean any blood spillage with household bleach (do not put bleach onto your skin)
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, nail files or anything which may come into contact with blood or body fluids
- Practice safe sex

Please note: hepatitis B is not spread through everyday contact e.g touching, sneezing, coughing or using the same toilet.