

## How do I know if I've already been infected?

The only way to know if you've been infected is to have your blood tested.

## Should I have a blood test before I start the hepatitis B vaccine series?

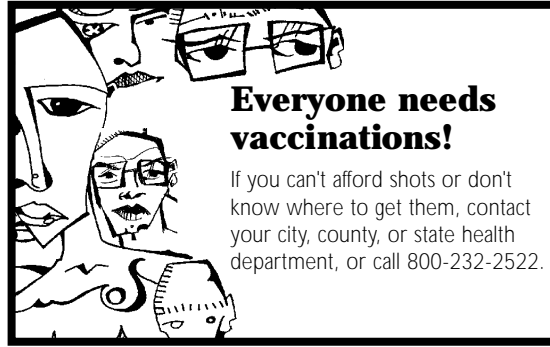
Talk to your doctor about whether you need this testing. Most people do not need a blood test. If you and your doctor decide you need testing, start the vaccine series at the same visit. That way you will be closer to being protected from HBV.

## Will hepatitis B vaccine protect me from hepatitis A or hepatitis C?

No. Hepatitis A and hepatitis C are different diseases caused by different viruses. There is a vaccine for hepatitis A but there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. For information on hepatitis A and hepatitis C, talk to your doctor or your local health department.

## What if I can't afford these shots?

Sometimes these shots are available at no charge through clinics or health departments. Call your clinic or local health department for details. And, while you're at it, find out what other vaccinations you need, too!



### Immunization Action Coalition

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# Every week thousands of sexually active people are infected with hepatitis B



## Get protected! Get vaccinated!

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a sexually transmitted disease. It is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV is spread much like HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. HBV is found in the blood, semen, and vaginal secretions of an infected person. HBV is easier to catch than HIV because it is over 100 times more concentrated in an infected person's blood.

## How serious is hepatitis B?

HBV can cause severe liver disease, including liver scarring (cirrhosis) and liver cancer. Over 6,000 people in the United States die every year from hepatitis B-related liver disease. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to prevent this disease.

## How great is my risk of getting HBV infection from sex?

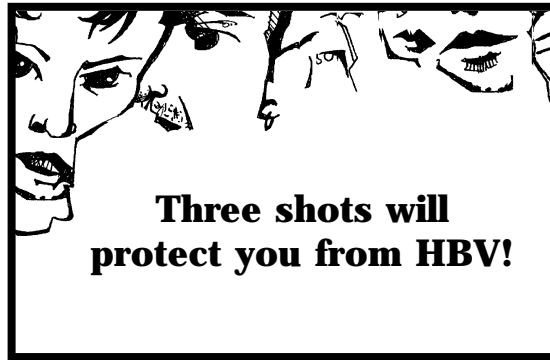
If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you are at risk for hepatitis B virus infection and need to be vaccinated!

Do you have more than one sex partner?  yes  no

During any six-month period, have you, or your partner, had sex with more than one person?  yes  no

Do you or your sex partner have a sexually transmitted disease at this time?  yes  no

Have you ever had a sexually transmitted disease?  yes  no



## Is sex the only way I can get HBV?

No. HBV is a sexually transmitted disease, but it is spread in other ways, too. It is a hardy virus that can exist on almost any surface for up to one month. HBV can be spread by:

- unprotected vaginal or anal sex
- sharing needles or paraphernalia (works) for illegal drug use
- contact with open sores
- living in a household with a person with long-term HBV infection
- body piercing (including ear piercing) or tattooing with unsterile equipment
- sharing toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers, or washcloths
- human bites

You do not get hepatitis B virus infection from sneezing, coughing, dry lip kissing, or holding hands.

## How do I protect myself from HBV?

Get three hepatitis B shots. The shots are usually given over a period of six months.

Tell your sex partner(s) to get vaccinated, too. There are very few STDs you can be vaccinated against so always follow "safer sex" practices.

## What are the symptoms of HBV?

Only about half of the people who are infected with HBV get symptoms. Symptoms might include:

- loss of appetite
- nausea
- fever
- dark-colored urine
- yellow-tinged skin and eyes
- extreme tiredness
- pain in joints
- bloated and tender belly

## Do people fully recover from HBV?

Most people who get HBV as adults will fully recover. However, approximately 6% will remain infected and will carry HBV in their bodies for life and can still spread the virus to others. People who stay infectious do not necessarily look or feel ill, but they are at increased risk for liver failure and liver cancer and need ongoing medical care.

