

- > Hepatitis B is a liver infection. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). The virus is passed on during unsafe sex or through blood contact.

What will you notice if you have hepatitis B?

A hepatitis B infection can develop in different ways. Many people have no symptoms at all after becoming infected. Within two to three months after infection, some people do develop symptoms:

- tiredness
- lack of appetite and nausea
- fever and pain in the right upper abdomen
- whites of the eyes and skin can turn yellow (jaundice)
- dark urine (like strong tea)
- stools (faeces) are pale (colour of putty)
- itching

- > The jaundice disappears after several weeks. Tiredness may last weeks or months. If the virus remains in your body for longer than six months it is said to be a chronic hepatitis B infection. Most people with chronic hepatitis B have few symptoms, although perhaps some tiredness.

Risk of hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus. The virus is found in the blood, semen and vaginal fluid of someone who is infected. Hepatitis B is infectious from six weeks after the first symptoms of the infection appear until the virus has disappeared from your blood.

The virus can be passed on in several ways.

You can become infected with the virus if infected blood, semen (including pre-seminal fluid) or vaginal fluid come into contact with a cut in your skin or the mucous membrane (lining) of the mouth, nose, eyes, anus or genitals.

For example:

- by having unsafe sex with a partner who is infected with hepatitis B
- by the use of an infected needle (injection, piercing, tattoo or acupuncture)
- by using an infected toothbrush or razor

- > In the Netherlands you are not at any risk of infection through a blood transfusion. In this country all blood donations are thoroughly tested for hepatitis B.

If a woman with hepatitis B becomes pregnant, she can pass on the virus to her baby during birth. So all pregnant women in the Netherlands are tested for hepatitis B.

Vaccination against hepatitis B

There is a safe and effective vaccine against hepatitis B. If you have hepatitis B yourself, you should warn your sexual partner(s) and anyone living under the same roof so that they can be vaccinated against the infection.

- > If you are pregnant and have hepatitis B, then your baby will be given antibodies against HBV and vaccinated immediately after birth.
- > In the Netherlands, anyone who has a higher than average risk of becoming infected with hepatitis B is advised to have the vaccine. For example:

- if your sexual partner or someone living under the same roof has hepatitis B
- if you are a man who has sex with men
- if you are a sex worker
- if you inject drugs
- if you work in healthcare
- if you are planning to visit a region where hepatitis B is very common. This is the case in countries outside Western Europe, Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand. People there are often infected with the hepatitis B virus at birth or at a young age

- > Since 2011, all children born in the Netherlands have been vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Treatment for hepatitis B

Acute hepatitis B usually goes away within six months without any medication. Rest and healthy nutrition are important during that time. But sometimes the virus leads to a chronic infection. The person remains a carrier of the virus and can infect others. A carrier can take drugs to suppress the virus. Often the virus disappears completely from your body.

Warning partners

If you have hepatitis B, your doctor will report this to the GGD health service. They will then get in touch with you to advise you about how to prevent passing on the virus and about vaccination. If you have hepatitis B, it is important to warn your sexual partners of the previous six months. Advise them to get in touch with the

- > GGD or their doctor. Is it difficult for you to warn partners yourself? Then ask your local GGD health centre to do it for you. They will not mention your name. partnerwaarschuwing.nl is a Dutch website you can use to warn your partners.

For more information about hepatitis B go to soaids.nl/en/hep-b

AIDS STI helpline

Do you have a question about hepatitis B that has not been answered in this leaflet?

- > **Call the AIDS STI helpline:** 0900 204 204 0 (10ct per min.)
Monday and Tuesday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Wednesday to Friday: 2.– 6 p.m.
- > **Send an email to the AIDS STI helpline:**
Sense@soaids.nl, you will receive an answer within two working days.
- > **Or visit the chat office hour on Soatest.nl**
Monday to Thursday: 1.30 – 3.30 p.m.

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