

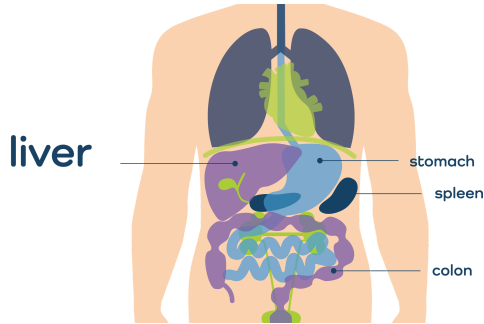
Delta Detect

Understanding
Hepatitis B and D

Your liver and why it's so important!



Your liver is one of the largest and hardest-working organs in your body. Located under your ribs on the right side of your abdomen, your liver:



- Filters harmful substances from your blood
- Helps digest food by producing bile
- Stores nutrients and energy
- Fights infections
- Produces, regulates, and balances hormones

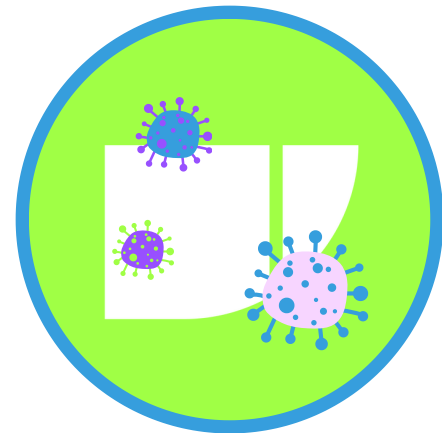
What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis is the inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by things like viruses, certain medications, alcohol, or autoimmune conditions. When the liver is inflamed, it can't perform important jobs well, like cleaning your blood, digestion and absorption, and storing energy.

What is viral hepatitis?

Viral hepatitis is a group of infections that cause inflammation in the liver. Over time, this can lead to liver scarring, liver failure, or even liver cancer.

There are several main types of viral hepatitis. In Canada, the most common types of viral hepatitis are A, B, and C, while hepatitis D is considered rare. Each type is caused by a different virus and is transmitted in different ways. Some are short-term infections, while others can become chronic and lead to serious liver damage.



Viral hepatitis is present in Canada and awareness is your first step in prevention and treatment. Understanding how to protect yourself and others is essential for a healthier and safer community.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and can cause inflammation and damage. Some people recover in a few weeks (acute hepatitis B), while others develop a lifelong infection (chronic hepatitis B), which can lead to serious problems like liver scarring, failure, or even cancer.

How do you get hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B spreads through blood and certain bodily fluids, like semen or vaginal fluids. It's not spread through everyday contact like hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing, or sharing food.

How is hepatitis B spread?

- From mother to baby during childbirth
- Intimate connections with someone who has the virus
- Sharing needles, syringes, or drug equipment
- Tattooing or piercing with unsterile tools
- Sharing razors or toothbrushes with someone infected
- Health care workers can be exposed to infected blood



What are the symptoms?

Some people, especially young children, may not have any symptoms at all. But when symptoms do appear, they can include:



Loss of appetite



**Stomach pain
or discomfort**



**Feeling very tired
(fatigue)**



Fever



**Joint or muscle
pain**



Pale stools



**Feeling nauseous
or throwing up**



Dark urine



**Yellowing of eyes
or skin (jaundice)**

How is hepatitis B diagnosed?

A simple blood test can diagnose hepatitis B. It can reveal whether you currently have the virus, had it in the past and cleared it, or have been vaccinated and are protected. Your doctor may also check how your liver is working with blood tests, and may order an ultrasound or liver scan to look for signs of inflammation or scarring.

How is hepatitis B treated?

Acute hepatitis B

If you have acute hepatitis B, your body will likely fight off the virus on its own.

What to do:

- Get plenty of rest
- Eat well and stay hydrated
- Avoid alcohol
- Let your immune system do the work

Most people recover fully and develop lifelong protection against hepatitis B.

Chronic hepatitis B

Chronic hepatitis B can be managed with antiviral medications that reduce the amount of virus in the body. While these treatments help control the infection, they do not cure it.






Antiviral medications can:

- Lessen the virus in your body
- Protect your liver
- Reduce the risk of liver cancer and cirrhosis
- Give you peace of mind

Common treatments in Canada:

- Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF)
- Tenofovir alafenamide (TAF)
- Entecavir

What you can do to lower your risk:

-  **Get vaccinated:** The hepatitis B vaccine, offered at birth or in middle school, is the best way to protect yourself and others.
-  **Practice safe injections:** Never share or reuse needles. Make sure all equipment is properly sterilized, even in healthcare or personal care settings.
-  **Practice safe intimate connections:** Use barrier methods (like condoms) to reduce the risk of spreading or getting hepatitis B through sexual contact.
-  **Maintain good hygiene:** Wash your hands often and avoid sharing personal items like razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers.
-  **Get screened:** Regular testing helps detect hepatitis B early so it can be treated and the risk of transmission can be reduced.

How can you protect your unborn baby from hepatitis B?

If you're pregnant, it's important to get tested for hepatitis B at your first prenatal visit. If the virus is detected, your baby can be protected with a vaccine and an injectable medication (HBIG) within 12 hours of birth, followed by completing the full vaccine series in their first 6 months.

Who is considered high risk?

While anyone can get hepatitis B, some people have a higher risk of being exposed to the virus. Recommended recipients of hepatitis B vaccine for pre-exposure prevention include:

- Healthcare workers and first responders
- People who inject drugs
- Sexually active individuals, including men who have intimate connections with men
- People born in or travelling to countries where hepatitis B is more common
- People who are incarcerated or work in correctional facilities
- Anyone who received a blood transfusion before 1992

If you're in a higher-risk group, taking steps to protect yourself—like getting tested and vaccinated—is a powerful way to care for your health and the health of those around you.

A photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair laughing heartily while holding a young child in a red and white striped shirt. The scene is set indoors, likely in a living room, with a window and a framed picture visible in the background.

Hepatitis B and D are still present in Canada. You have the power to protect yourself and the next generation by getting vaccinated.

Hepatitis D (HDV)

Hepatitis D (HDV) is a rare but serious liver infection that only occurs in people who already have hepatitis B. It can cause more severe liver damage, but with the right care, it can be prevented and managed.

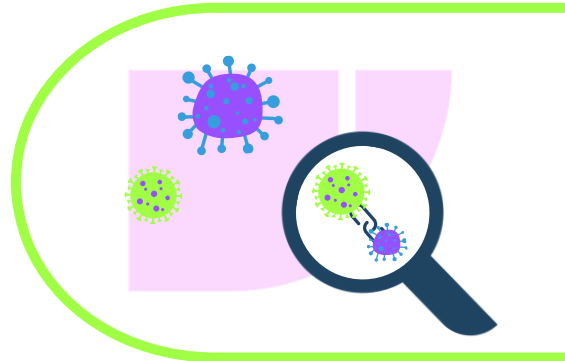
How do you get hepatitis D?

You can only get hepatitis D if you already have hepatitis B, as the hepatitis D virus needs hepatitis B to survive and grow in your body. You can be infected with both viruses at the same time (co-infection), or get hepatitis D later if you already have hepatitis B (superinfection).

How is hepatitis D spread?

Hepatitis D spreads the same way as hepatitis B, through blood or bodily fluids. This includes:

- Sharing needles or drug equipment
- Unprotected intimate connections
- Unsterile medical, piercing, or tattoo equipment
- From mother to baby during childbirth



If you have hepatitis B, talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested for hepatitis D, especially if you were born in or have lived in regions where hepatitis D is more common, such as Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or South America. Also, if you have risk factors like injection drug use, blood transfusions in certain countries, or unsafe tattooing or piercing.



Having both hepatitis B and D can lead to faster and more severe liver damage, increasing the risk of cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer, as the disease often progresses more quickly than hepatitis B alone.

What are the symptoms?

Many people with hepatitis D do not experience any symptoms, especially in early stages. When symptoms do appear, they are similar to those of hepatitis B, but are often more severe.

How can you prevent hepatitis D?

There's no vaccine specifically for hepatitis D, but the hepatitis B vaccine protects against both viruses. Getting vaccinated against hepatitis B is the most effective way to prevent hepatitis D.

Are there treatments for hepatitis D?

New treatments for hepatitis D are becoming available in Canada. Health Canada has approved bulevirtide for certain adults with chronic hepatitis D and evidence of active disease, including those with compensated liver disease. Treatment eligibility is determined by a liver specialist and depends on factors such as liver function, viral activity, and overall health. Ongoing monitoring by a specialist is important to help manage the disease and support long-term liver health.

Why is the Filipino community at risk for hepatitis D?

Filipino communities may be at increased risk for hepatitis D, a virus that affects people who already have hepatitis B. Hepatitis B is more common in parts of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, and some people may have been exposed earlier in life. In Canada, factors such as limited awareness, language differences, and challenges accessing healthcare can make testing and care less accessible. Learning about your risk and getting tested are important steps to protect your liver health.

Why are the Punjabi and Hindi-speaking communities at risk for hepatitis D?

Punjabi and Hindi-speaking communities may have a higher risk of hepatitis D because it only occurs in people who already have hepatitis B, which is more common in some parts of South Asia. Some people may have been exposed before moving to Canada, especially in places where routine testing and vaccination were less available. Barriers such as language and access to healthcare can make it harder to get tested and treated, so increasing awareness and screening is important.

You are also encouraged to connect with local support services for guidance and care:

- South Asian Canadians Health & Social Services (SACHSS): 647-523-6380 info@sachss.org
- Apna Health: 647-846-2233 (available 24/7 in Punjabi and Hindi)
- Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS): 60 West Drive, Unit 202, Brampton, ON L6T 3T6, (905) 677-0889, info@pchs4u.com

Questions to ask your doctor about hepatitis

- Should I get tested for hepatitis B or D?
- What type of test will I need to confirm if I have hepatitis?
- If I've been exposed, how soon should I get tested?
- If I have hepatitis, can it be treated or cured in my case?
- What are the latest treatment options available for my type of hepatitis?
- Do I need to see a liver specialist (hepatologist)?
- How can I protect my family and close contacts from getting hepatitis?

Liver disease affects 1 in 4 Canadians. From newborns to older adults. It can impact anyone, at any stage of life.

Liver Canada was first established in 1969 out of the passion and concern of a group of business leaders and doctors who believed that liver disease needed a champion. Since then, we've relentlessly driven advancements in research, treatment, and support.

With the help of donors, volunteers, researchers, health professionals, corporate supporters, and community members, we are changing the future of liver health for those living in Canada.

To help fund liver health support services, education and research, visit: liver.ca/ways-to-give.

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