



Hepatitis B

Information for patients from Infection Prevention and Control

You have been diagnosed with **Hepatitis B**. This leaflet explains:

- what Hepatitis B is
- what the symptoms are; and
- how it can be treated.

We hope the leaflet will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis is a general term that refers to inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by many things, such as drugs, chemicals, and viruses. There are five different types of virus which are known to cause hepatitis, and Hepatitis B is one of them. They work by entering the body and attacking the liver. This causes the inflammation and destruction of the liver cells.

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Many people with Hepatitis B have no symptoms.

- Others have a flu-like illness, including a sore throat, tiredness, joint pains, and a loss of appetite.
- Other symptoms may include nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting.
- Sometimes patients have abdominal (tummy) discomfort.
- Symptoms often progress to jaundice (a yellow appearance).

The incubation period is between 1 and 6 months (usually 3 months). The incubation period is the time between becoming infected and becoming ill.

Most people (about 95 people in every 100) will recover fully, but this can take up to 6 months or even longer. A small number of people develop a more severe form of chronic (long-term) illness.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment. Normally your doctor will advise you to:

- get plenty of rest
- eat healthily; and
- avoid alcohol.

How long will I be infectious?

Around 1 in 4 people who are infected will become carriers of the virus. This means they will be infectious to others, even after they have recovered from the disease.

How is Hepatitis B transmitted from person to person?

Hepatitis B is found in all of the body fluids of an infected person, including blood, serum, saliva, breast milk, and urine. For this reason, the virus can be transmitted:

- through sex
- through injection or puncture of the skin with contaminated needles
- by the spillage of bodily fluids into open cuts and sores; and
- from mother to baby during childbirth and breastfeeding.

How can I avoid becoming infected with Hepatitis B?

In the UK all donated blood is screened for Hepatitis B. There are also precautions you can take to avoid becoming infected with Hepatitis B.

- Do not share needles.
- Cover cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing / plaster.
- Wear protective clothing, plastic gloves, and aprons when carrying out activities where you come into contact with body fluids.
- Wear a condom during sex.
- Dispose of sharp instruments such as needles safely, in specially designed containers which are strong enough not to be punctured.

Is there a vaccine?

Yes. Hepatitis B can be prevented. There is a safe and effective vaccine which people at risk of infection can have. It is given as three injections over 6 months.

Further Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to either the nurse-in-charge of the ward or the matron. If they are unable to help you or you need further information, please contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on:

- **Kent and Canterbury Hospital**, Canterbury
Telephone: 01227 766877 extension 722-4216 or 722-6810
- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital**, Margate
Telephone: 01843 225544 extension 725-3625 or 725-4234
- **William Harvey Hospital**, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 633331 extension 723-8202 or 723-8198

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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