



WHAT'S TRUE AND WHAT'S NOT

You've probably heard about hepatitis and liver disease. Some things you've heard may be right, and some may be wrong. Getting the facts about hepatitis B will help you make good choices to protect yourself and your loved ones.

| Causes of hepatitis B | |
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| MYTH | FACT |
| Hepatitis B is caused by unclean food or water or improperly prepared food. | <p>Hepatitis A can be spread by contaminated food or water.</p> <p>Hepatitis B is spread through direct contact with infected blood or other body fluids, such as during childbirth or through unprotected sex. It is not spread by food or water.</p> <p>While proper food preparation prevents food poisoning and other ailments, it does not prevent hepatitis B.</p> |
| Hepatitis B is caused by drinking too much alcohol. | <p>Drinking alcohol does not cause hepatitis B, but drinking too much can make the symptoms of hepatitis B worse. Both alcohol and hepatitis B can damage the liver. People with hepatitis B who drink too much alcohol have a higher risk of serious liver damage or liver cancer.</p> |
| Hepatitis B is caused by smoking. | <p>While smoking can damage all of the body's organs and lead to cancer, it does not cause hepatitis B.</p> <p>If you have hepatitis B, smoking increases the risk of liver cancer.</p> |
| If you are angry or sad, or have other negative emotions, you are more likely to get hepatitis B. | <p>Your temperament or emotions do not cause—or prevent—hepatitis B.</p> |
| You can get hepatitis B by sharing utensils with someone who has the infection. | <p>There is little hepatitis B virus in saliva, so you can't get hepatitis B by sharing utensils with someone else (unless the utensils have blood on them).</p> <p>You cannot get hepatitis B by touching something that someone with the disease has touched.</p> <p>You cannot get hepatitis B through respiratory droplets or secretions.</p> |
| You can get hepatitis B from mosquito bites. | <p>Mosquitoes can spread other diseases (such as West Nile disease and malaria). There is no evidence that mosquitoes can spread hepatitis B. It is best to use an approved insect repellent to avoid mosquito bites.</p> |
| Hepatitis B is inherited. | <p>Hepatitis B is not inherited, but a baby may be exposed to the virus during childbirth. To prevent this, all babies born to mothers with hepatitis B should receive the hepatitis B vaccine and hepatitis B immune globulin within 12 hours of birth. These babies should also receive all 3 doses of the hepatitis B vaccine, with the last dose at 6 months.</p> <p>For more about preventing hepatitis B transmission in childbirth, see the Patient Booklet <i>Hepatitis B: Prevention</i>.</p> |