



Long-term infection with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) affects over one million people in the U.S. While a majority of infected people remain “healthy carriers” for a lifetime and do not show ongoing liver damage. Other carriers develop more severe liver disease leading to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure. If you are an HBV carrier, you need to take important steps to care for yourself and prevent the spread of HBV.

- Regular monitoring at least once a year of your liver determines if the disease is progressing and if cirrhosis or liver cancer is developing.
- Periodic ultrasound and alpha-fetoprotein blood tests for liver cancer.
- Review all medications with your physician. Even some over-the-counter and alternative medicines can harm the liver. Remind your doctor, dentist or healthcare providers that you are an HBV carrier.
- All cuts and open sores should be covered with a bandage. Wipe up your blood spills, and then re-clean the area with a solution of one part household bleach to ten parts water.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, needles, syringes, nail files, clippers, scissors or any object which may come into contact with your blood or body fluids. Do not share food which has been in your mouth and do not pre-chew food for babies.
- Do not donate blood, plasma, body organs, tissue, or sperm.
- If pregnant, tell your physician you are an HBV carrier. A child born to a carrier mother needs to receive the hepatitis B immune globulin and the first hepatitis vaccine injection within 12 hours of birth.
- Avoid or severely restrict alcohol intake. Your liver may be further damaged by alcohol, particularly if taken with acetaminophen, found in Tylenol or other cold and headache remedies.
- Be careful not to spread the HBV virus to others. Hepatitis B is transmitted by contact with infected blood, serum, semen, and vaginal fluids. Wash your hands with soap after touching your own blood or body fluids. Throw personal items such as tissues, menstrual pads, tampons, or bandages away in a plastic bag. HBV is not spread by sneezing or coughing, or casual contact.
- Tell sexual partners you have hepatitis B. Partners should be tested for HBV, and if not immune to the virus, they should receive the vaccination series of three shots. Until protection from HBV has been guaranteed, use a condom.
- People living in the same household as a carrier should see their doctor for hepatitis B testing and vaccination. If anyone is exposed to the your blood or body fluids, hepatitis B immune globulin given within two days to two weeks can prevent the infection.
- Stay informed about research developments regarding treatments so you are able to make the best decisions. Research is being conducted to develop therapeutic vaccines for carriers.

Contact your doctor or HFI for information or if you have questions. Watch HEPATITIS ALERT for news.