

## **Hepatitis B Information for Body Artists**

### **What is hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a disease caused by infection with the hepatitis B virus (HBV). It is transmitted through contaminated blood. Hepatitis B can be both an acute (brief) and chronic (long term) infection. Chronic infection with HBV can lead to liver cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer.

### **Is there a vaccine for hepatitis B?**

Yes. The best way to prevent hepatitis B infection and disease is by getting the hepatitis B vaccine. Babies routinely get hepatitis B vaccine soon after birth. People who have contact with blood should get hepatitis B vaccine. For the best protection, three or four doses are needed over six months, so body artists should start the vaccination series right away. The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective-- so effective that the World Health Organization calls it the first "anti-cancer" vaccine.

### **How is hepatitis B virus spread?**

Hepatitis B virus can be spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid infected with HBV enters the body of a person who is not infected. HBV is found in highest amounts in blood and lower amounts in semen and vaginal fluid. Sharing or reusing needles for injection or tattoos and unprotected sex are common ways to spread HBV.

### **Can a person spread hepatitis B and not know it?**

Yes. As a body artist, you may not know when you have been exposed to hepatitis B virus, so it is important to get vaccinated and follow other steps to reduce your risk of exposure. Many people with chronic hepatitis B virus infection do not know they are infected since they do not feel or look sick but they are still contagious (can spread the virus to others).

### **How long does the hepatitis B virus survive outside the body?**

Hepatitis B virus can survive outside the body at least 7 days. During that time, the virus can still cause infection if it enters the body of a person. Tools and surfaces exposed to blood should be properly cleaned immediately.

### **How soon after exposure to hepatitis B will symptoms appear?**

On average, symptoms appear 90 days (or 3 months) after exposure, but they can appear any time between 6 weeks and 6 months after exposure. A blood test can tell if you are infected with hepatitis B.

### **What are the symptoms of acute hepatitis B?**

Symptoms of acute hepatitis B, if they appear at all, can include: fever, fatigue, joint or muscle pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, and jaundice (yellow color in eyes and skin). At this time, there is no treatment for acute hepatitis B.

### **What are the symptoms of chronic hepatitis B?**

Some people have ongoing symptoms similar to acute hepatitis B, but most people with chronic hepatitis B don't feel sick for as long as 20 or 30 years. About 15%–25% of people with chronic hepatitis B develop serious liver conditions, such as cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) or liver cancer. Chronic hepatitis B infection can lead to death.