



# **Caring for your health**

**Preventing hepatitis B-related  
liver cancer.**



This flipchart is designed for healthcare workers to use with patients who have been diagnosed with hepatitis B. It provides practical information on managing hepatitis B to prevent liver damage and liver cancer.

Each topic has a patient-facing page with an image and some plain English information. This is the page that should be facing the patient.

The health worker page gives the doctor, nurse or allied health worker more information to verbally discuss with their patient. Health workers can use it as a script or as prompts for discussion.

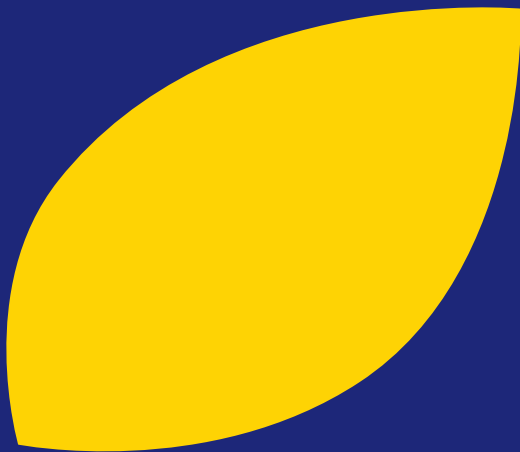
Everyone has a different experience with hepatitis B. It is important to tailor specific information to the patient (e.g. how often they need to come in for a check-up; do they need to be on treatment).

It is also helpful to make appointment and medication compliance easy for the patient. This could be done by booking in regular check-ups on the spot (if relevant) or discussing ways with the patient to help them remember to attend their appointments or take their medicine daily.

For patients who are pregnant, refer to [\*Me, my baby and hepatitis B\*](#) for specific information.

## Important things to remember:

- Hepatitis B is a virus that can affect your liver.
- If not treated in some people, it can lead to liver cancer.
- You can manage hepatitis B and have a healthy life.
- See your doctor regularly for a check-up.  
Ask your doctor or nurse how often you need a check-up.
- Take your medicine daily if your doctor has told you to.



## What is a liver?

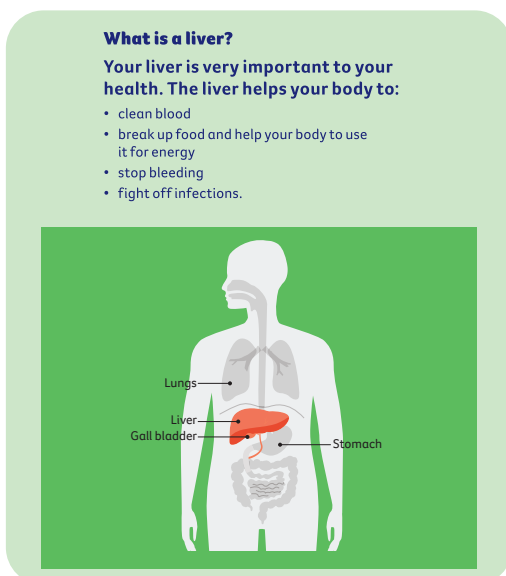
The liver is the largest organ inside your body.

An adult liver is about the size of a dinner plate or football.

Your liver is on the right side of your body below your ribs.

The liver helps your body to:

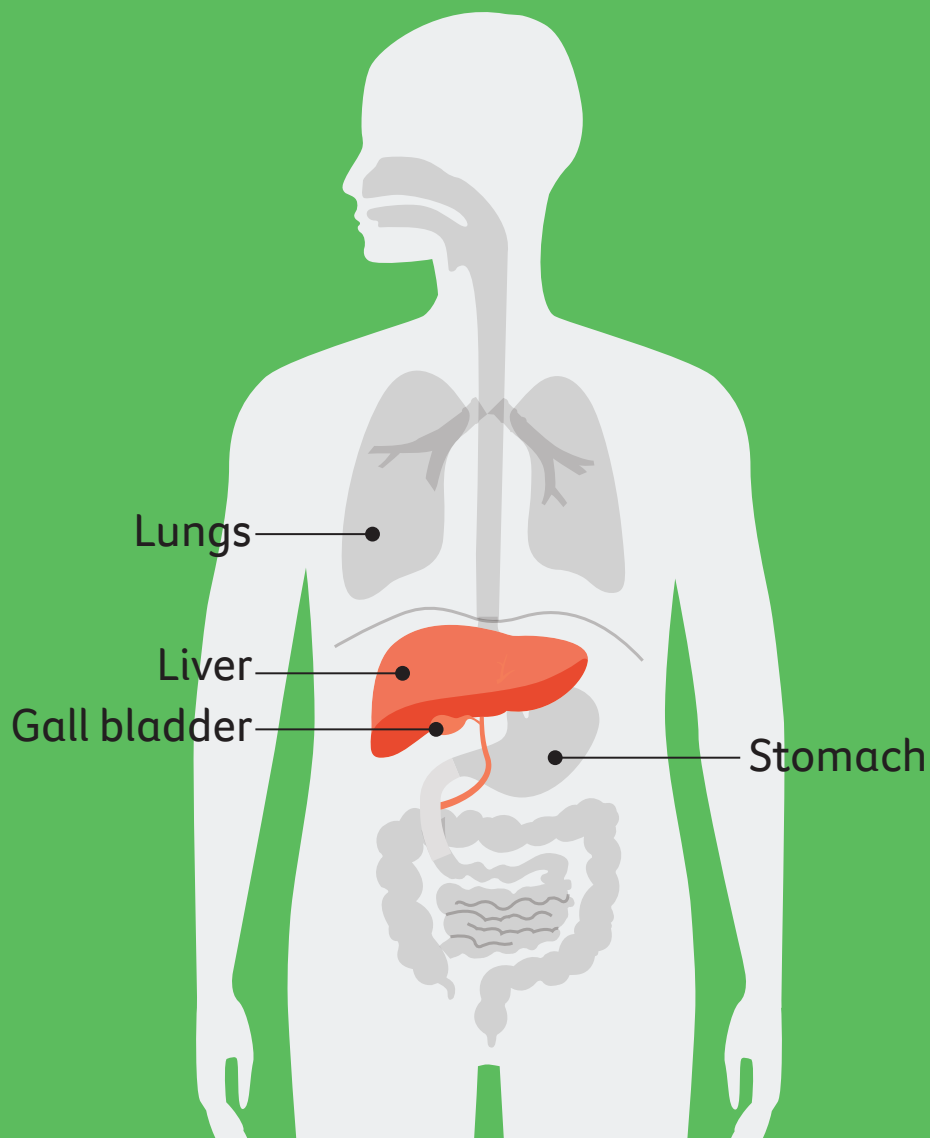
- clean blood by removing unwanted or harmful things from it
- break up food and help your body to use it well for energy
- make special chemicals to help the blood clot and fight off infections.



## What is a liver?

**Your liver is very important to your health. The liver helps your body to:**

- clean blood
- break up food and help your body to use it for energy
- stop bleeding
- fight off infections.



## What is hepatitis B and how did I get it?

Hepatitis B is a virus that stays in people's liver and blood and can make them sick.

Hepatitis B can affect anyone. Hepatitis B affects millions of people around the world. It is one of the most common infectious diseases globally.

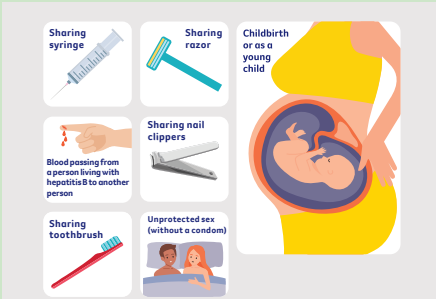
Hepatitis B can be passed through blood or sexual fluids from someone who already has the virus. This includes:

- At birth or as a young child. This is the most common way people get hepatitis B.
- Sharing items that could have particles of blood on them such as (but not limited to) a syringe, razor, toothbrush or nail clippers. Sometimes the blood particles are so small that you can't see them.
- Having unprotected sex (without a condom).
- In some countries with high rates of hepatitis B – it could also be transmitted through injuries involving blood passing between a person living with hepatitis B to another person; going for an operation, blood transfusion, dental visit, or getting a tattoo.

**What is hepatitis B and how did I get it?**

Hepatitis B is a virus. It can affect your liver and make you sick. Hepatitis B affects millions of people around the world.

Hepatitis B can be passed to other people through:



The infographic illustrates seven transmission routes for hepatitis B. It includes icons for a syringe, a razor, a toothbrush, nail clippers, a person being born, and two people in an intimate relationship. A large illustration of a pregnant woman is also present, emphasizing the risk of transmission during childbirth.

It is important to encourage your family members to get tested for hepatitis B.

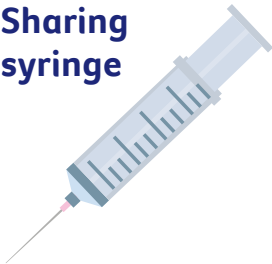
You cannot transmit hepatitis B with contact such as shaking hands, kissing and hugging, or sharing plates, cups or meals. You cannot get hepatitis B from eating dirty food or certain types of food.

# What is hepatitis B and how did I get it?

Hepatitis B is a virus. It can affect your liver and make you sick. Hepatitis B affects millions of people around the world.

Hepatitis B can be passed to other people through:

Sharing syringe



Sharing razor



Childbirth or as a young child



Blood passing from a person living with hepatitis B to another person

Sharing nail clippers



Sharing toothbrush

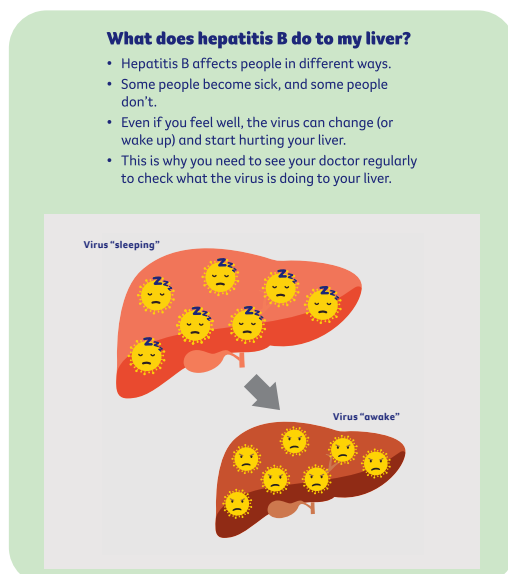


Unprotected sex (without a condom)



## What does hepatitis B do to my liver?

- Different people are affected by hepatitis B in different ways.
- The virus can be 'sleeping' and does not cause any problems.
- The virus can be 'awake' and can cause damage to your liver. Your doctor or nurse might say the infection is active.
- People can also go through different stages of the disease through their lives.
- A 'sleeping' virus can 'wake up' at any time and start to cause damage to your liver.
- 1 in 4 people with hepatitis B will get liver damage, and some will get liver cancer. If not treated, they can get very sick.

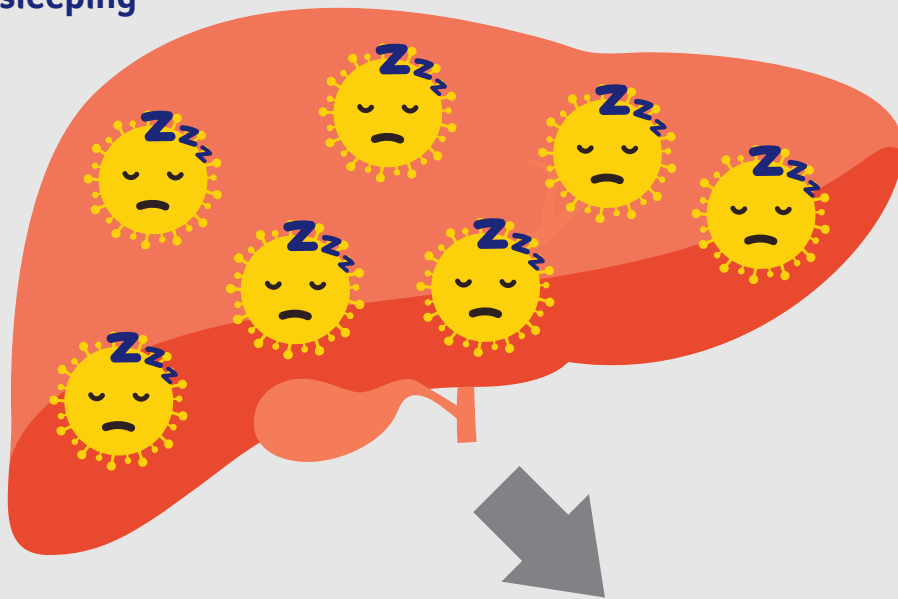




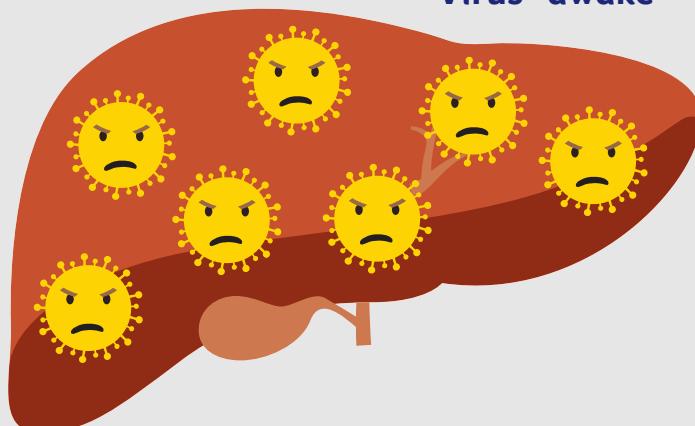
## What does hepatitis B do to my liver?

- Hepatitis B affects people in different ways.
- Some people become sick, and some people don't.
- Even if you feel well, the virus can change (or wake up) and start hurting your liver.
- This is why you need to see your doctor regularly to check what the virus is doing to your liver.

Virus “sleeping”



Virus “awake”

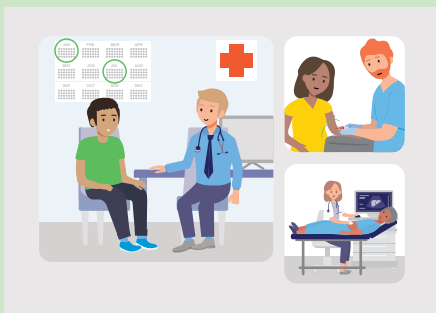


## What happens when I visit the doctor?

- Because the hepatitis B virus can start damaging your liver at any time, it is important to **visit your doctor regularly**.
- Your doctor can use different tests to check what the virus is doing in your body and if there is any liver damage.
- During a doctor's visit, your doctor will refer you to a pathology collection centre for a blood test.
- The blood test checks how much virus is in your blood and how well your liver is working. It checks if the virus is still sleeping or has 'woken up'. This helps the doctor decide if you need treatment or need to be checked more regularly.
- Some people may also need to do an ultrasound and/or a FibroScan®. This machine takes pictures of your liver from outside of your body. It can find any problems in the liver at an early stage when it is easier to treat. This process is quick and painless.
- Most people need a check-up 1 or 2 times a year.
- The number of check-ups a person needs to attend each year is different for everyone. It depends on your age, where you were born, whether you are on treatment and whether you are at risk of liver cancer.

### What happens when I visit the doctor?

- Most people need to see their doctor for a check-up 1 or 2 times a year.
- At your check up, you will be asked to get a blood test.
- You may also get an ultrasound to check the health of your liver. It is quick and painless.
- Attend your check-up even if you feel healthy or if your last test was good.



- The check-up can happen in a doctor's clinic or in a hospital, depending on where you live.
- You need to see your doctor for a check-up even if your last test results were normal, if you do not feel sick or if you are taking medicine.
- We can make an appointment for you today.

# What happens when I visit the doctor?

- Most people need to see their doctor for a check-up 1 or 2 times a year.
- At your check up, you will be asked to get a blood test.
- You may also get an ultrasound to check the health of your liver. It is quick and painless.
- Attend your check-up even if you feel healthy or if your last test was good.



## Do I need treatment?

- Not everyone with hepatitis B needs treatment. When your liver tests are normal you don't need any treatment.
- If your liver tests are not normal, you may be offered treatment.
- If your doctor told you to take tablets, you need to take your tablets every day - even if you feel well.
- Taking your medication keeps your liver working well and will help to stop the hepatitis B virus from causing any more damage. This will help prevent liver cancer.

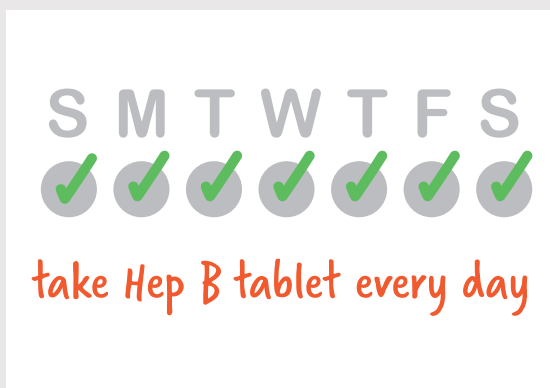
Discuss with your nurse, doctor or pharmacist how to take your medication and what to do if you miss a dose.



## Do I need treatment?

Some people with hepatitis B need medicine to keep them well, and some people don't.

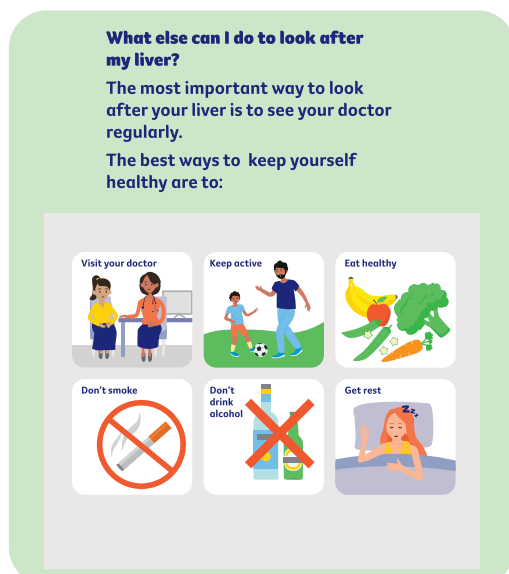
If your doctor told you to take your medicine, you need to take it every day, even if you feel well.



## What else can I do to look after my liver?

The best ways to look after your liver are to:

- Visit your doctor regularly for a blood test, and maybe an ultrasound (Ask your doctor or nurse when your next check-up is).
- Take your medicine if your doctor said you need treatment.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods.
- Exercise and keep active.
- Not smoke.
- Not drink alcohol or take recreational drugs.
- Rest when you need to.
- Speak to your doctor about getting a check for other liver problems or viruses.



## What else can I do to look after my liver?

The most important way to look after your liver is to see your doctor regularly.

The best ways to keep yourself healthy are to:

Visit your doctor



Keep active



Eat healthy



Don't smoke



Don't drink alcohol

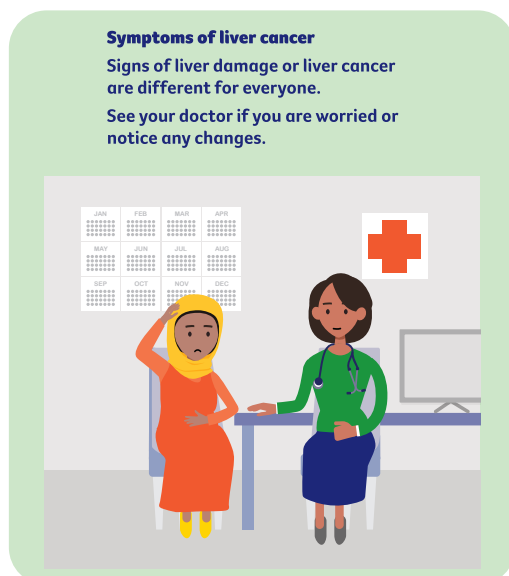


Get rest



## Symptoms of liver cancer

- Most people with hepatitis B do not feel sick until the disease is very serious.
- That is why it is important to visit your doctor regularly as a blood test is the only way to know what the virus is doing in your body.
- When a person's liver is getting more damaged or when they have liver cancer, they may start to feel sick.
- Some patients may feel tired, have pain or fever, or have yellowing of their skin and whites of their eyes.
- Symptoms are different for everyone, so if you do not feel right or are worried, see your doctor immediately.

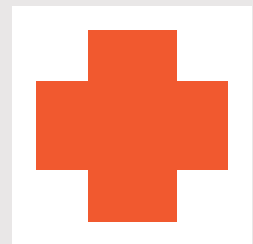
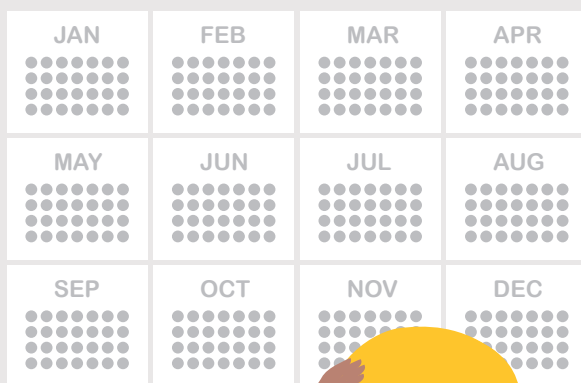




## Symptoms of liver cancer

Signs of liver damage or liver cancer are different for everyone.

See your doctor if you are worried or notice any changes.



## How do I protect my family and others?

- Family members, sexual partners and others living with you need to be tested for hepatitis B.
- If they have not got hepatitis B, they can get a free hepatitis B vaccination (injection) to protect them. They need to finish 3 doses of the vaccination to be safe. The Australian Immunisation Handbook provides information on groups that require different dosages.
- Clean up blood, cover open sores.
- Don't share items that might contain particles of blood such as razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, earrings, needles or things for tattoos and piercing.
- Use condoms when having sex with a new partner or someone who isn't vaccinated.
- Speak to your doctor or nurse about what to do if you are pregnant and see [Me, my baby and hepatitis B](#) for more information.

### How do I protect my family and others?

#### The most important things to do are:

- Ask your family members to get tested for hepatitis B.
- If they do not have hepatitis B, they should get an injection (vaccination) to protect them from the virus.
- They need to finish 3 doses of vaccination (or get 3 rounds of injections) to be safe from the virus.



## How do I protect my family and others?

### The most important things to do are:

- Ask your family members to get tested for hepatitis B.
- If they do not have hepatitis B, they should get an injection (vaccination) to protect them from the virus.
- They need to finish 3 doses of vaccination (or get 3 rounds of injections) to be safe from the virus.





# Anyone can be affected by hepatitis B. No one should be treated differently or less kindly because they have hepatitis B.

If you have any questions about your rights or have experienced problems with health services, visit [liverwell.org.au/liver-conditions/stigma-discrimination](https://liverwell.org.au/liver-conditions/stigma-discrimination) or call the LiverLine on 1800 703 003.

For more information about liver cancer in English, you can call Cancer Council on 13 11 20.



For an interpreter in your language, call 13 14 50 and ask them to connect you with Cancer Council.

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