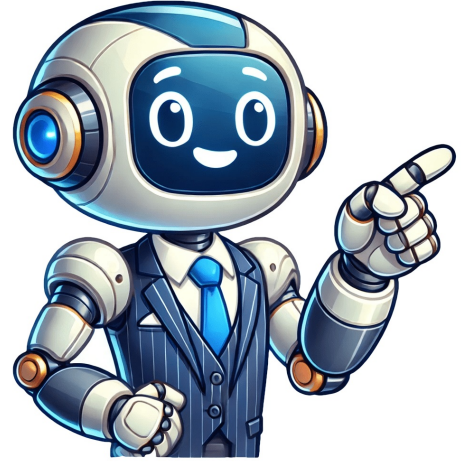


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how active the virus is. People who pick up hepatitis B as an adult usually fight off the virus before it can cause any harm. A short-term infection of 6 months or less is called acute hepatitis B. Acute hepatitis B usually doesn't need any treatment and you may never know you had it. Read more about acute hepatitis B. When a hepatitis B infection lasts for more than 6 months it is called chronic hepatitis B. Chronic means long-lasting. People with chronic hepatitis B usually have the virus for the rest of their lives. The most important thing that affects whether someone is likely to get a chronic infection is how well their immune system works. How many people who pick up hepatitis B get a chronic infection? Adults are much less likely than children or babies to get a chronic infection. This is because adults usually have a fully-developed immune system which is better at fighting off the virus. 90 out of 100 babies who pick up hepatitis B from their mother at birth get a chronic infection. 25 to 30 out of 100 children who pick up the infection before the age of 5 get a chronic infection. Less than 5 out of 100 people who pick up hepatitis B as adults get a chronic infection. Back to top Some people with acute hepatitis B have symptoms that are like a mild bout of flu. The main way hepatitis B causes health problems is by damaging the liver. This can lead to cirrhosis or a type of liver cancer called hepatocellular carcinoma. Most people with hepatitis B do not get cirrhosis or liver cancer. Treatment to keep the virus under control reduces the risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer. Read more about how hepatitis B causes liver disease . Chronic hepatitis B can lead to other problems with your health. Many of these problems are related to inflammation and the immune system. For example, hepatitis B can also cause: Your clinical team can tell you more about these problems and the chance of you being affected. Treatment to control the hepatitis B virus helps reduce these effects on your health. Living with hepatitis B might also increase the chances of having a type of cancer called non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The most common symptom is having one or more painless swellings in your neck, groin or armpit. If you get swellings or notice any other unusual changes to your body, tell your doctor. Back to top Next Myths and facts Published July 2023 Review due: July 2026