

# Treatment for Hepatitis B

*This information sheet can be used to explain check-ups and test results and make discussion easier.*

## Chronic hepatitis B and your health

You have chronic hepatitis B. This means that the hepatitis B virus has been in your body for at least 6 months.

Your test results show that taking hepatitis B medicine now would help protect your liver from damage and keep it healthy.

Even if you feel well, the virus can hurt your liver without you knowing. Without treatment, some people get liver cancer or scarring of the liver; this is called cirrhosis. If your liver is damaged, it will have to work harder to keep you healthy.

## Taking medicine

Taking hepatitis B medicine will lower the virus levels in your blood, reduce liver damage and lower your risk of cancer. But the virus can go to sleep and stay in the liver for a long time.

If you stop taking the medicine, it can't help to protect you from liver damage. The virus can wake up and make you very sick.

If you don't have enough medicine to last until your next appointment, you can get another prescription by talking to your doctor.

Most people keep taking hepatitis B medicine over the long term (like blood pressure medication). While there is no permanent cure yet for hepatitis B, ongoing medical research may find one in the near future.

You can also ask your doctor any questions you have about the medicine.

## Check-ups

**Everybody** with chronic hepatitis B should have a check-up every 6 months.

A check-up means a **blood test** every 6 months. Once you are older and have had hepatitis B for a long time, it may also include a liver **ultrasound scan** to check for liver cancer.

A check-up tells the doctor:

- if the medicine is working,
- if the virus has woken up and levels are increasing, or
- if your liver is hurt or if there is cancer.

You can make an appointment to see your local doctor or liver specialist for these check-ups.

## Stay healthy – detect cancer early

Liver cancer can grow very quickly. A liver ultrasound scan every 6 months can help pick up cancers early, when they are still small enough to treat and cure.

## Keep your liver strong

- Get a check-up every 6 months
- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking
- Eat healthy foods in moderation
- Do exercise that you enjoy, such as jogging, walking or tai chi
- Tell your doctor if you are taking herbs or traditional medicines

## Hepatitis B and your family

It's a good idea for your family members to find out if they have hepatitis B too by getting a blood test.

Family members who do not have hepatitis B can have a vaccination to protect them against it.

Family members with hepatitis B should have regular check-ups too. They may not need to take medicine right now as their virus may be less active.

### Your test results today

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

**ALT blood test**  
(shows liver inflammation) \_\_\_\_\_  OK

**Viral load blood test**  
(shows level of virus in the blood) \_\_\_\_\_  OK

**Liver ultrasound**  
(liver scan, looking for cancer) \_\_\_\_\_  OK

### Your next check-ups

**Blood tests due on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Doctor visit due on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ultrasound due on:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Acknowledgements

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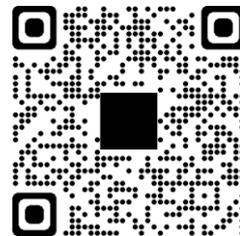
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## Do you have questions or need more help?

The following websites have accurate information to help you improve your liver health and live with hepatitis B:

<https://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/pages/category/hepatitis-b> - Tips about living with hepatitis B



<https://www.hepbcommunity.org/> - Free online forum to connect with other people with hepatitis B and with experts

