

## Who should be vaccinated against hepatitis B?

- Persons at increased risk of infection
  - Health professionals
  - Patients on dialysis
  - Patients prior to undergoing major surgery
  - Contacts of persons with hepatitis B virus infection
- Persons at increased risk of developing the disease
  - Patients with chronic liver diseases
  - HIV-positive persons

## Our patient self-help partner

is the "Deutsche Leberhilfe e. V.". Patient information and useful contacts are available at: Deutsche Leberhilfe e. V., Krieler Straße 100, 50935 Köln, Germany, Tel: 0221- 28 29 980, E-mail: [info@leberhilfe.org](mailto:info@leberhilfe.org), Web site: [www.leberhilfe.org](http://www.leberhilfe.org).

## The German Liver Foundation (Deutsche Leberstiftung)

has the mission to improve patient care by promoting research networks and to raise public awareness about diseases of the liver. Additional information is available online at [www.deutsche-leberstiftung.de](http://www.deutsche-leberstiftung.de).

## Source:

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## Ask the experts

Call 01805 – 45 00 60 (€0.14 a minute from German landlines, max. €0.42 from mobile phones).

Telephone consultations (in German) are available from Monday to Thursday from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

## Donations for research

Our donation hotline 09001 – 38 53 278 offers you an easy and fast way to make a donation via the telephone.

To support the German Liver Foundation, you can also make a donation or an endowment.

## Contribution by direct credit:

Deutsche Leberstiftung,  
Account number: 10 55 600,  
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We appreciate any support you can give!

Our partners:



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# Hepatitis B

## Information for patients and relatives

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In Europe, millions of people are affected by chronic liver disease. Liver cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) is among the top four disease-related causes of death among adults aged 30 to 50 years. Frequently cirrhosis is preceded by hepatitis.

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis may be caused by any hepatitis virus (A, B, C, D, E), and chronic hepatitis may develop in the presence of hepatitis B, C and D virus infections.

In Europe, several thousand new hepatitis B and C infections occur annually, according to estimates. Hepatitis A and E viruses cause acute infections only. Alcohol, fatty liver and metabolic disorders (e.g. diabetes mellitus) may also lead to hepatitis, which in turn may result in chronic liver disease.

## How frequent are hepatitis B virus infections?

The hepatitis B virus (HBV) is very infectious. The infection is accompanied by very few symptoms. Approximately 0.4 to 0.7% of the HBV carriers in Germany have no signs of the disease. Each year several thousand new infections are reported. The incubation period is 30 to 180 days.

## Who is particularly at risk and should be tested for hepatitis B?

- Health professionals
- Patients on dialysis
- Newborns of mother with hepatitis B virus infection
- Migrants
- Homosexuals
- Sexual partners of persons with hepatitis B virus infection
- Drug addicts

## Can the disease take different courses?

Acute HBV infections in adults heal spontaneously in 95 % of cases. However, chronic infections develop very frequently in infants and toddlers. The chronic HBV infection persists longer than 6 months. Over the years or even decades, chronic HBV infection may result in cirrhosis of the liver, which in turn may give rise to hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC, liver cancer).

## How can HBV infection be diagnosed?

Using a specific blood test. For basic testing, it is sufficient to test for HBsAg and anti-HBc. If HBsAg is positive, screening for HBeAg, HBV-DNA and anti-HDV should be performed.

## Are other invasive investigations required for planning of the therapy?

It is advisable to perform a needle biopsy of the liver to evaluate microscopically (histologically) the degree of inflammation and stage of fibrosis (increase of connective tissue) present in the liver.

## Can hepatitis B be treated?

Yes! On the one hand, we have interferons which influence the immune system and inhibit viral proliferation. On the other hand, there are several drugs available as tablets which have a direct and very strong inhibiting effect on viral proliferation. Your doctor will decide together with you which therapy is best suited to your needs.

## Can HBV infection be prevented?

Yes! Since 1982, an approved vaccine is available, which has been generally recommended by the WHO (World Health Organisation) since 1992.