“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. Liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and helps fight against infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected.

Hepatitis B can be a serious liver disease that results from viral infection which cause inflammation of the liver.

Acute Hepatitis B: a short-term infection; occurs within the first 6 months after someone is infected by the virus.

Chronic Hepatitis B: a lifelong infection

The likelihood that a person develops a chronic infection depends on the age at which someone becomes infected. Up to 90% of infants infected with the Hepatitis B virus will develop a chronic infection. In contrast, about 5% of adults will develop chronic Hepatitis B.

Overtime, chronic Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death.
**How it spread?**
The virus can be spread through:

- Unprotected sex with an infected person.
- Injection drug use.
  - Sharing needles, syringes, and any other equipment to inject drugs with someone infected with Hepatitis B.
- During birth
  - Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

Hepatitis B is not spread through breastfeeding, sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing. Unlike some forms of hepatitis, Hepatitis B is also not spread by contaminated food or water.

**Symptoms & Signs**
Most are asymptomatic. They can present with:

- Fever
- Feeling easily tired
- Loss of appetite
- Upset stomach
- Vomiting/nausea
- Dark-colored urine
- Grey-colored stool
- Joint pain
- Yellow skin & eyes

If an acute infection, symptoms usually appear within weeks of exposure and can last up to 6 months or more. In chronic Hepatitis B, it can take years to develop and can be a sign of advanced liver disease.

**Prevention**

- Hepatitis B Vaccination
- Practice safe sex by barrier method
- Avoid sharing needles to inject drugs
- Medical personnel should wear gloves when handling bodily fluids
- Avoid borrowing another person’s toothbrush, razor, or anything else that could have blood on it.

**What to do if you come into contact with Hep B virus?**

- Seek medical attention immediately
- Blood tests will help to diagnose Hepatitis B
- You will be given immunoglobulin and vaccination against Hepatitis B if you are not previously immunized

**Management of disease**
Acute Hepatitis B usually is not treated unless it becomes chronic. It is self-remitting and management involves symptomatic relief. Patient must be closely monitored for long-term liver damage.

Chronic Hepatitis B occurs when the infection lasts longer than 6 months. Chronic Hepatitis B patient is treated with oral antiviral medications.

If patient develop complications of chronic hepatitis such as liver cirrhosis, patient may need liver transplantation.

**Further info...**

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