

Hepatitis B: After Your Visit

Your Care Instructions

Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus. The virus spreads through infected blood, semen, and other body fluids during sexual contact and when people share needles to inject drugs. It can also spread when an infected person shares items that may have blood on them, such as razors or toothbrushes. After you are infected, it may be 60 to 90 days before you notice symptoms. You may never notice symptoms. But you can give the infection to other people both before and after you have symptoms.

Hepatitis B can cause tiredness, body aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and yellowing of your skin and eyes (jaundice). Most people with hepatitis B get better after 4 to 8 weeks. Once you have had hepatitis B and recovered, you will not get it again. If the virus stays in your body for a long time, it can cause serious liver disease.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- ε Reduce your activity level to match your energy level.
- ε Avoid alcohol for as long as your doctor recommends. This may be months. Alcohol can make liver problems worse.
- ε Make sure your doctor knows all the medicines you take. Some medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), can make liver problems worse. Do not take any new medicines unless your doctor says it is okay.
- ε If your doctor prescribes antiviral medicine, take it exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- ε If you have nausea or vomiting, try to eat smaller meals and eat more often.
- ε Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- ε If you have itchy skin, keep cool, stay out of the sun, and wear cotton clothing. Talk to your doctor about using over-the-counter medicines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or loratadine (Claritin), to control the itching. Read and follow the instructions on the label.

To prevent spreading hepatitis B

- ε Tell the people you live with or have sex with about your illness as soon as possible.
- ε Do not donate blood or blood products, organs, semen, or eggs (ova).
- ε Stop all sexual activity or use latex condoms until your doctor tells you that you can no longer give hepatitis B to others. Avoid anal contact with a sex partner while you are infected.
- ε Do not share personal items that may have your blood on them. These include razors, toothbrushes, towels, or nail files.
- ε Use lotions or ointments to prevent chapped or broken skin, which can expose others to your blood.
- ε Tell your doctor, dentist, and anyone else who may come in contact with your blood about your illness.
- ε If you are pregnant, tell the doctor who will deliver your baby about your illness. Be sure your baby gets medicine to prevent infection, starting right after birth.
- ε If you get blood on your clothing or other fabrics, clean them well.
- ε Be sure to carefully get rid of sanitary napkins and tampons or other disposable items that have your blood on them. Place them in sealed plastic bags before you throw them away.
- ε Use a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water to clean surfaces that have your blood or any other body fluid (such as semen or menstrual blood) on them. These surfaces include toilet seats, countertops, and floors.

- ε If you have long-term hepatitis B, always use latex condoms during any sexual activity. You can infect others with the virus even if you do not have symptoms.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- ε You passed out (lost consciousness).
- ε You vomit blood or what looks like coffee grounds.
- ε You are suddenly confused and cannot think clearly.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- ε You are dizzy or lightheaded, or you feel like you may faint.
- ε You have signs of needing more fluids. You have sunken eyes and a dry mouth, and you pass only a little dark urine.
- ε You have nausea and vomiting that does not go away.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- ε You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to www.southdenvergi.com, log into the web portal, and enter I471 in the search box to learn more about Hepatitis B: After Your Visit.

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