

HOW SOON CAN A PERSON RETURN TO WORK/THE CARE SETTING?

Hepatitis B is not transmitted in normal social situations and a person can return as soon as they feel well enough to do so. The only exceptions are when Hepatitis B carriers who are healthcare workers are involved in performing exposure prone invasive procedures, guidance should be sought from Occupational Health departments.

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,
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**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



HEPATITIS B

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

Hepatitis B is a virus which causes inflammation of the liver. It is quite different from Hepatitis A.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

In many cases there are no symptoms. When a person does show symptoms these can include “flu” like aches and pains, stomach upset, loss of appetite and jaundice (a yellow discoloration of the whites of the eyes and often the skin).

HEPATITIS B CARRIERS

Another important feature of the infection is that a small proportion of those infected people may become carriers of the virus, this means they will be infectious to others even after recovery from the disease.

A child infected at birth is much more likely to become a carrier – less so than when infection is acquired in adult life. 95% of people who develop infection as adults recover fully.

IS IT INFECTIOUS?

Yes. The virus can be spread by unprotected sex, by blood to blood contact (e.g. sharing equipment for injecting drugs or tattooing/body piercing) and from an infected mother to her baby. The virus is not spread by normal everyday social contact.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

This can be anything between 6 weeks to 6 months. (Time from exposure to symptomatic infection.)



CAN TRANSMISSION BE PREVENTED?

Yes. All cuts and breaks on the skin should be covered with a waterproof dressing.

When dealing with blood and other body fluids which might contain blood, carers should protect themselves by using the appropriate protective clothing, i.e. vinyl or latex gloves and a plastic apron (face/eye protection if splashes to the face are likely).

- Safer sex (using condoms) will help prevent the spread of Hepatitis B.
- In Health Care settings all donated blood is checked for the virus. Sterile needles and syringes are used for all injections.
- A vaccine against Hepatitis B is available. This is routinely offered to the families and sexual partners of people carrying the Hepatitis B virus.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

Most people with Hepatitis B will get better on their own without any treatment apart from rest. Your Doctor will advise plenty of rest, to eat healthily and to avoid alcoholic drinks. Some people get better but still carry the virus in their blood (Hepatitis B carriers). These people may need to attend their doctor regularly for liver tests and to discuss treatment.