



GEORGIAN BAY WOMEN'S CLINIC

Hepatitis B: What You Should Know

What's Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). It can be a short-term (acute) infection or a long-term (chronic) illness that can lead to serious liver damage, liver failure, or liver cancer. It spreads through contact with infectious body fluids, such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluids.

What Are the Symptoms?

Some people with Hepatitis B don't have symptoms, but when they do, they can include:

Early Symptoms

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements

- Joint pain

Later Symptoms

- Yellowing of the skin and the whites of your eyes (jaundice)

How Can You Prevent It?

Get Vaccinated: The Hepatitis B vaccine is highly effective and usually given in a series of shots.

Practice Safe Sex: Use condoms to reduce the risk of transmission.

Avoid Sharing Needles: Don't share needles or other drug paraphernalia.

Be Cautious with Blood: Avoid direct contact with blood and body fluids. Use gloves if you need to handle blood.

Safe Piercing and Tattoos: Make sure any piercing or tattooing is done with sterile equipment.

How Do You Get Tested?

Blood Test: Hepatitis B is diagnosed through blood tests that check for the presence of the virus, its antigens, or the antibodies your body makes in response to the virus.

How Is It Treated?

Acute Hepatitis B: There's no specific treatment for acute Hepatitis B. Rest, proper nutrition, and fluids are recommended.

Chronic Hepatitis B: Treatment may include antiviral medications to reduce liver damage and prevent complications. Regular monitoring by a healthcare provider is important.

Follow-Up

Regular Monitoring: If you have chronic Hepatitis B, regular check-ups and blood tests are crucial to monitor liver health and the effectiveness of treatment.

Healthy Lifestyle: Avoid alcohol and drugs that can harm your liver. Maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly.

Remember:

- Hepatitis B can be both an acute and chronic illness. Chronic Hepatitis B requires long-term management.
- Vaccination is the best way to prevent Hepatitis B.
- If you think you might have Hepatitis B or have been exposed to it, see your healthcare provider for testing and guidance.