

# HEPATITIS B TESTING

## TESTING INFORMATION FOR VETERANS



### WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

- Hepatitis B is a disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV).
- Most adults who have HBV infection will recover in 6–12 months without treatment.
- However, children and some adults can develop chronic (lifelong) hepatitis B infection.
- There is a HBV vaccine available that may prevent infection.

### WHO SHOULD GET A HBV TEST?

Talk with your health care provider about being tested for HBV infection if you:

- Share needles.
- Are an injection drug user.
- Have sexual contacts with a person known to be hepatitis B positive.
- Are a man who has sex with men.
- Are HIV-positive.
- Are on hemodialysis.
- Are a person needing immunosuppressive therapy, including chemotherapy, immunosuppression related to organ transplantation, and immunosuppression for rheumatologic or gastroenterologic disorders.
- Have elevated ALT/AST of unknown etiology.
- Donate blood, plasma, organs, tissue, or semen.
- Were born to a hepatitis B positive mother.
- Are the source of blood or body fluids for exposure that might require post-exposure prophylaxis (e.g., needlestick, sexual assault).
- Plan on being vaccinated for hepatitis B.

- Were born in a region of high and intermediate HBV endemicity.
- Are a U.S. born person not vaccinated as an infant and your parents were born in regions with high HBV endemicity.

### SHOULD I GET A HBV TEST?

- Yes, if any of the above statements is true. Getting tested for HBV is the only way to know if you have HBV infection.
- If your HBV test is negative, you may be able to get vaccinated to prevent HBV infection.
- If you have HBV infection you may not show symptoms for years, but can still pass the virus to others.
- If you have HBV infection you can seek early treatment from your VA provider to prevent more serious liver disease and death.

### HOW CAN I BE TESTED FOR HBV?

- Your VA health care provider can order the HBV blood test. Results are usually available in 1-2 weeks and will let you know whether you have HBV infection or if you can benefit from HBV vaccine.

### WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- [www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/basics/hepatitisB-index.asp](http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/basics/hepatitisB-index.asp)
- [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HBV/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HBV/index.htm)
- <http://healthfinder.gov/findservices/searchcontext.aspx?topic=399>

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