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
• www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HBV/index.htm

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