

A Silent Killer — Hepatitis B

Why is it a “silent killer”?

Hepatitis B is a serious infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) and can lead to premature death from cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver failure, or liver cancer.

Chronic HBV infection is dangerous because there are often no symptoms. Many infected persons are not aware that they are infected. By the time symptoms such as abdominal pain and/or abdominal distension appear, it is often too late for treatment to be effective. Therefore, early detection by regular screening is recommended.



Who should screen for HBV?

- All pregnant women
- Infants born to HBsAg-positive mothers
- Injection drug users
- Persons with HIV
- Persons who require immunosuppressive or cancer chemotherapy
- Blood and organ donors

How HBV is transmitted

- Birth: Mother-to-child infection
 - Bloodborne infection
 - Sexually transmitted
- ★ HBV is NOT transmitted through food or water

Vaccinating against Hep B!

The hepatitis B vaccine is so effective at preventing HBV infection and liver cancer that it is known as the world’s first “anti-cancer vaccine.” The vaccination series can be started at any age. The usual schedule is as follows:



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