



### **What is it?**

- A viral disease that affects the liver.
- About 10% of cases will carry the virus for many years, possibly life carrier.
- The younger an individual is when exposed to HBV infection, the more likely they will become a chronic carrier.
- This carrier state can lead to cirrhosis and cancer of the liver late in life.

### **What are the symptoms?**

- Many have no symptoms
- Others will have jaundice (yellowing of the skin)
- Mild fever
- Abdominal discomfort
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Joint pain

### **How quickly do symptoms develop?**

- Within 45-180 days, average 60-90 days, after coming in contact with the virus.

### **How is it spread?**

- By sexual contact with an infected person.
- By contact with infected blood (need a route of entry, i.e. crack in skin).
- By sharing needles.
- By sharing toothbrushes or razor blades.
- By receiving a bite from an infected person.
- By receiving a tattoo or piercing with unsterilized needles or contaminated ink
- Not spread by water, food or by casual contact that occurs at most schools or workplaces.

### **How long is it contagious?**

- For weeks before the onset of symptoms and for as long as the person is carrying the virus.

### **How is it treated?**

- After assessment by a doctor, sometimes medications are used to treat the carrier state.
- When and how to treat your hepatitis B is a decision between you and your doctor.
- Current research is directed toward finding other effective antiviral treatments.
- These treatments do not provide a cure, but they offer control of the virus so that further damage to your liver can be prevented.

## **What can you do if you are infected with the Hepatitis B virus?**

- Eat a healthy & nutritious diet.
- Avoid or limit alcohol intake.
- Use safer sex practices. Your partner(s) should consult a doctor for testing as soon as possible.
- If testing proves that your partner has no protection against hepatitis B, he/she will be advised to receive hepatitis B immune globulin and hepatitis B vaccine.
- Everyone who lives in your home should be tested and offered the hepatitis B vaccine as needed
- Be tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Tell your doctor, dentist and other health care providers that you are infected so that they can take the necessary precautions.
- Do not give blood or donate your organs.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers or needles with other people
- Clean up blood with freshly diluted household bleach (1 part bleach, 9 parts water). The bleach will kill any hepatitis B left on the surface.
- Discard articles contaminated with blood in a plastic bag.
- Cover cuts and sores with bandages.

## **How can it be prevented?**

- Hepatitis B vaccine can protect you against the hepatitis B virus.
- All pregnant women should have prenatal testing so that newborns can receive hepatitis B vaccine & immune globulin if needed
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers or needles with other people
- Use safer sex practices
- Only receive tattoos or piercings at facilities that use single use needles and inks and/or follow proper sterilization procedures.

## **Whom should I talk to if I have any questions?**

Communicable Disease Control, Algoma Public Health at (705) 942-4646, [www.algomapublichealth.com](http://www.algomapublichealth.com), or your health care provider.