Your Journey with Hepatitis B

For more information scan this QR code or go to myhealth.alberta.ca/hepatitis-b-pathway

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. Most people living with hepatitis B got it when they were young and not immunized. The younger you are when you get it, the more likely it will become a chronic (long-term) infection. If you have hepatitis B or are a contact of someone who has it, this pathway can help. Managing hepatitis B is possible. You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat hepatitis B. If you have any questions along the way, please ask your healthcare team. Click on the page numbers in blue if you want more information about the step in your journey.

Understand who is most at risk (page 6)

- Anyone can get hepatitis B and those who aren't vaccinated are most at risk.
- Who else is most at risk? Learn more in this section.
- Make an appointment to see your healthcare provider.

Visit your healthcare provider (page 7)

- Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.
- Share how you feel, your symptoms, and concerns. Your healthcare provider needs to hear from you and understand who you are and what matters to you.
- Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements.

Get your tests (page 10)

- A blood test is the only way to confirm if you have hepatitis B, recovered from it in the past, or were exposed to the hepatitis B virus (HBV).
- If your results show you have hepatitis B, your healthcare provider will order follow-up blood tests and an ultrasound of your abdomen to check your liver health.
- You and your healthcare team will need your blood test results to decide the correct treatment plan for you.

Whole-person health (page 2)

Review your results with your provider or public health nurse (page 11)

- If blood tests show you have hepatitis B, your healthcare provider or public health nurse will help you understand what your results mean, discuss next steps to protect yourself and those around you, and answer questions you have.
- You will be referred to a specialist to explore what management is right for you. Ask how long it will take to see a specialist and what to do if you don't hear back.

See a specialist to help you manage your hepatitis B (page 13)

- Your healthcare team will give you important strategies to keep you as healthy as possible. These include things like physical activity, food, and drink choices to keep your liver healthy.
- Your specialist may recommend medicines based on how active the virus is in your body and the health of your liver. These medicines, called antiviral medicines, help to slow or stop the growth of the virus, and help protect your liver.
- By deciding what works best for you, and following the recommended treatment and management strategies, people with hepatitis B can continue to live meaningful lives.

Keep taking care of yourself and protect others (page 15)

- Your healthcare team will help you understand how to best manage your health and protect your household and sexual contacts. These includes things like physical activity, food, and drink choices to keep your liver healthy, and things you can do to prevent spreading the virus to others. If you don't understand something, ask.
- People with chronic hepatitis B should have regular monitoring, including specialist visits and blood work, to asses liver health. Consistent care is key to your treatment and safety.
- Close contacts of a person living with hepatitis B should get the vaccine series if they haven't already gotten it. Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis B infection, and it is safe and effective.

Important Tips:

Need a family doctor?
ahs.ca/findadoctor

Need a translator or interpreter? Let your healthcare provider know

Need health advice?
Call Health Link at 811

Need to find programs and resources in your community?
Call 211 or visit ab.211.ca

Primary Care Alberta

Current as of: April 2025

How to use this resource

The information provided in this resource is based on validated evidence from a variety of sources, including healthcare professionals in Alberta, peer-reviewed journals, current clinical guidelines, validated patient resources, and specialty care recommendations. It is intended as general health information and should not replace the clinical judgment or advice of a qualified healthcare provider. This resource does not address the unique needs of individual patients. Always consult with your healthcare team and follow their recommendations for your specific care.

These pages are for you to use as needed. You can look through all of them at once or just the ones that help you now. Feel free to come back to the resource whenever you need it.

Whole-person health

The whole-person health approach will help you and your healthcare team better manage your health condition. It is drawn from the teachings of the medicine wheel.

Whole-person health means thinking about all parts of your health and wellness: physical, financial and social, spiritual, and emotional. All these parts are connected and influence each other. It's important to be aware of your personal needs in each part and to share that information with your healthcare team.

- **Physical**: your specific health conditions and how well your body works
- **Financial and Social**: your ability to meet your housing, transportation, food, and health needs, feeling supported to manage your daily life, and having meaningful relationships
- **Spiritual**: your beliefs, sense of connection, and purpose
- **Emotional**: how you think, feel, and cope with life events

Whole-person health

Whole-person health also reminds us that we are all connected and work together: you, your support systems, and your healthcare providers. Your healthcare providers could be your doctor, nurse practitioner, specialist, or a team that comes together with you to plan and organize your care.

Your healthcare provider needs to understand who you are and what matters to you. This helps to build trust. But it can be hard to know what to share or what to say. Try starting by asking yourself:

"What are the things in my life that are important to me?"

"What are the things in my life that may be affecting my health and well-being?"

Bringing forward what matters to you is important. Here are some examples of things you may want to talk about with your healthcare provider:

Physical

"What symptoms should I watch for?"

"What can I expect about my health based on what we know now?"

"Do I have to tell anyone about my hepatitis B diagnosis?"

Financial and Social

"I need to be at work to get a pay cheque. How does hepatitis B affect my employment?"

"I need my daughter with me as a translator."

"I'm not sure how I will pay for my medicines this month."

Emotional

"How can I access support groups to help me cope with hepatitis B?"

"I'm worried about the health of my loved ones. I don't want to give them hepatitis B."

Spiritual

"It's important that I follow traditional healing practices."

"How can I include my culture's foods and family recipes in my nutrition plan?"

"It's important that my religious practice of fasting is respected and brought into my care."

"How can I use my spiritual beliefs to help me to stay positive and play an active role in managing my hepatitis B?"

What is hepatitis B?

The word "hepatitis" is a general term that means inflammation (swelling) of the liver. This pathway focuses only on hepatitis caused by the hepatitis B virus. However, hepatitis can also result from:

1. Other types of viral infections
2. Liver injury from alcohol or from certain medicines
3. Other medical conditions like extra fat in the liver
4. Autoimmune diseases (when the body attacks the liver)

Understanding the cause of hepatitis is the key to effective treatment.

About your liver

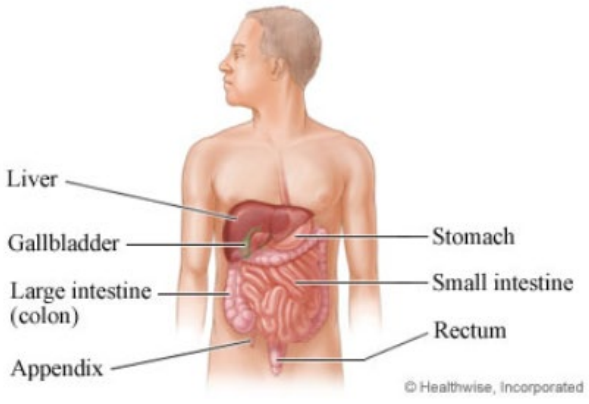
Your liver is an important organ. It performs over 500 daily functions that are vital to life. For example, it filters your blood to remove waste and harmful substances, helps digest food and absorb nutrients to give your body energy, and it helps fight infection.

About hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Hepatitis B can impact your liver's ability to function properly. Most people who have hepatitis B don't realize they have it, and either have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.

About 95% of adults who get hepatitis B will recover without treatment within 6 months. This means you don't have active hepatitis B anymore, and you can't spread the virus to others the way you could if you had active hepatitis B.

It is important to know that even after you've recovered from hepatitis B, DNA (genetic material) from the virus stays in your liver cells. Usually, this isn't a cause for concern, but in some cases, this means hepatitis B can become active again if your immune system is weakened (for example, if you need treatment like chemotherapy or an organ transplant).



In some cases, the hepatitis B virus remains active and leads to chronic (long-lasting) hepatitis B infection. Chronic hepatitis B can cause liver damage (called cirrhosis), liver cancer, and death. Ensure you talk with your healthcare team about your hepatitis B status, so you know what to expect over the long term.

Most people living with hepatitis B got it when they were young and not immunized. The younger you are when you get infected with hepatitis B, the greater the chance of developing chronic infection. For example, about 9 out of 10 babies who are not immunized at birth and get hepatitis B will develop chronic hepatitis B infection.

How the hepatitis B virus (HBV) spreads

Hepatitis B is a sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection. This means it spreads through contact with blood or body fluids that have the virus (like semen or vaginal secretions).

People with hepatitis B can spread the virus to others even if they don't have symptoms. Most people who have chronic hepatitis B can spread the virus to others for the rest of their lives.

How HBV can spread

Hepatitis B is **not** spread through casual contact, hugging, coughing, sneezing, kissing, using toilet seats, sharing food or drinks, sharing eating utensils (unless the infected person has cuts or sores in their mouth), or eating food prepared by someone who has hepatitis B.

Help is available

If you think you might have, or be at risk for, hepatitis B, you might feel scared or embarrassed to talk to your healthcare provider. Your healthcare team won't judge you. They are here to help and support you. Testing is the only way to know if you have hepatitis B. Early testing is important to help find treatment, monitoring, or prevention strategies to keep you and others healthy and safe.

Be aware of the following ways it can spread:

- From a pregnant person who has hepatitis B to their child during childbirth, because the baby is exposed to the pregnant person's blood. Exposure during childbirth is the most common way hepatitis B spreads.
- If someone who isn't immunized has unprotected sex (not using a condom) with someone who has hepatitis B.
- By sharing equipment for drug use (like pipes, straws, spoons, needles, syringes, and cookers).
- Through shared equipment that isn't cleaned properly to remove the virus (for example, equipment used when getting a tattoo or piercing, medical or dental equipment).
- By sharing personal items like razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, and jewelry.
- Through blood transfusions or getting an organ transplant in countries that don't screen blood for hepatitis B.

The good news is, treatment is available for those who have hepatitis B, and you can prevent this infection by getting immunized against hepatitis B. (For more information about preventing the spread of hepatitis B, see pages 18 and 19).

Understand who is most at risk for hepatitis B

Anyone who is not immunized against hepatitis B virus can get hepatitis B**.**

There are certain factors that put you at a higher risk of hepatitis B:

- You are born before 1982 in Canada
- You have never gotten the hepatitis B vaccine series
- The person who gave birth to you had hepatitis B when you were born
- You live with, or had sex (or other close contact) with, someone who has hepatitis B
- You lived in, or travelled to, a country that has high rates of hepatitis B. To see a list of countries with high rates of hepatitis B, visit: https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/aip/resource/121de497-de68-42f1-a1b9-868696932615/download/AIP-BP-Hepatitis-B-Endemic.pdf
- You are on dialysis (while dialysis in Canada is a safe procedure with strict protocols to manage spread of diseases like hepatitis B, there is still a very small risk due to working with blood)
- You share equipment for drug use (like pipes, straws, spoons, needles, syringes, cookers)
- You live, lived, or work in a place where people who are not related live or sleep and share common spaces (for example, a shelter or correctional facility). These are also called congregate living places.
- You received blood products outside of Canada (or before 1972 in Canada)

If you are not immunized against hepatitis B or think you might have it, talk to your healthcare provider.

Important: If you think you were exposed to the hepatitis B virus (HBV) and have not received the full vaccine series, call Health Link at 811 right away. You should be assessed as soon as possible after exposure to see if you can be treated with hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) for quick, short-term protection from the exposure. For long-term protection, you should get the first hepatitis B vaccine of the series (2-3 vaccines in total, depending on your age). You can get this treatment at a hospital or local public health office.

Getting these treatments as soon as possible after exposure is key to success (within 7 days after a needle stick injury and within 2 weeks after sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis B).

Visit your healthcare provider

Healthcare provider's assessment

It is normal to have many questions about your health. Your healthcare provider knows that hepatitis B can be hard to talk about, and they are there to support you.

Your healthcare provider will ask you questions about your history, activities, and who you are close to. These questions may feel personal. Your healthcare provider is here to give you the best care, and these answers will help them do that. Your healthcare provider will not judge you.

What should I watch for (symptoms of concern)?

Contact your healthcare team right away for assessment if you have:

- Dark, tea-coloured urine (pee)
- Severe abdominal (belly) pain
- Bloated or swollen abdomen (belly)
- Jaundice (when your skin or white part of your eyes are yellow in colour)
- High fever
- Severe nausea or vomiting
- Vomiting blood
- Melena (black, tarry stools), pale or light-coloured stool, diarrhea
- Dizziness, confusion
- Symptoms of dehydration (like dry eyes or mouth, peeing only small amounts)
- Swelling of the legs, ankles, and feet

Consider the following before your appointment:

- If you have symptoms, consider using a symptom tracker to write down important information to share with your healthcare team about your symptom(s).
- A symptom tracker can help you remember what symptoms you're feeling, when it started, how often it happens, and what makes it better or worse.
- Write down a list of your questions and concerns. When you're done, read your list and mark the most important things.
- Make a list of the prescription and non-prescription (over the counter) medicines you use, including any vitamins, herbs, and supplements.
- Ask someone you trust to go with you to your appointment. They can help you ask questions, write down instructions, and remember explanations.

What should I share with my healthcare provider?

- What concerns do you have about the impact hepatitis B may have on the things that are important to you, like your job, hobbies and interests, and relationships?
- What types of things help you work better with your healthcare team? What do you expect and need from the relationship with your healthcare provider?

There are lots of things in your life that can impact your ability to manage your health, like:

- Problems with money, housing, and access to transportation
- Alcohol or drug use
- Not enough support or help
- Childhood experiences
- Difficulty understanding or speaking English
- Not having the information and understanding of your health conditions to make informed decisions

It's important to talk about these things with your healthcare provider because they all play a role in your health and well-being.

You are the most important part of your healthcare team.

If you don't understand what your healthcare team is telling you, let them know right away. Be open and honest. You might say:

"This is new to me. Could you please explain it slowly, using language that is easier to understand?"

"It sounded like you said that I should… Did I understand that correctly?"

"Can you show me a picture or model to help me understand?"

Helpful tools and resources on next page.

Helpful tools and resources

- **Use a symptom tracker:** hqca.ca/symptom-tracker (Health Quality Council of Alberta)
- To get the most out of your visit, plan to write notes during the visit or see the Alberta Health Services **My Care Conversations app** (ahs.ca/careapp) website for more information about recording your conversation with your healthcare provider.
- Making the most of your appointment: myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=hw226888
- Working with your healthcare team: hqca.ca/info (Health Quality Council of Alberta)

Blood tests

Your healthcare provider will order blood tests. Depending on the results of your tests, your healthcare provider can learn if:

- You currently have hepatitis B
- You are protected from hepatitis B, either from getting immunized, or from recovering from hepatitis B infection in the past
- Your liver has been injured
- You have other infections - If you are at risk for one type of infection, you may be at risk for another. Your healthcare provider will share with you what they are testing for.

You will only have one needle for all these tests, but several vials of blood will be taken. Blood tests are very common and safe.

Additional tests for those who have hepatitis B

If your screening test results show that you have active hepatitis B infection, your healthcare provider will order some extra blood tests and an ultrasound to learn more about the status of your infection and liver health.

Ultrasound:

An ultrasound test uses sound waves to forms images on a screen. You will have an ultrasound of your liver to look for signs of liver damage or cancer:

- Are there abnormal spots?
- Is it enlarged?
- Is there swelling of the liver blood vessels?
- Is there any scarring?

How do I prepare for a liver ultrasound?

- You may be asked to eat a fat-free meal the evening before your test, and to avoid eating anything 8-12 hours before your test.

What should I expect during the test?

- You may be asked to change into a gown.
- You will be asked to lay on your back on an exam bed.
- A healthcare worker will put warm gel on your belly. They will use a device called a transducer to spread the jelly around so pictures of your organs can be taken and seen on a screen. You may be asked to change positions so they can get good pictures.
- Ultrasounds don't usually cause pain and there are no known risks of having this test.

Review your results with your healthcare provider or public health nurse

It is important to know what your test results are and what they mean for you personally. Your healthcare provider will get your blood test results and share them with you. Hepatitis B is a notifiable disease, which means Public Health will be informed of all cases of hepatitis B. Because of this, you may get a call from a public health nurse before you hear from your healthcare provider. Public health nurses know a lot about hepatitis B and they are here to help. They can answer questions you have and help you plan your next steps for treatment.

Take time to discuss your results with your healthcare provider or a public health nurse. Medical terms can be hard to understand. And even common words like "positive" or "negative" might mean something different for medical tests. Ask your healthcare provider or public health nurse for explanations and examples to make sure you fully understand.

You might ask:

"What does this mean for me?"

"Is there a current concern? If so, what is it?"

What your hepatitis B results may show

The following table gives a summary of what your results may show. If you would like to learn more about what tests might be ordered and what your test results mean, visit: www.hepb.org/resources- and-support/fact-sheets, then scroll down and click "Understanding Hepatitis B Blood Tests". This fact sheet is available in multiple languages.

Status	What this means
Protected (because of past infection)	You had, and recovered from, hepatitis B, but hepatitis B viral DNA stays in your liver cells. When viral DNA stays in your liver cells, you don't have active hepatitis B anymore, but if you develop a weak immune system in the future, there is a small chance the virus can become active in your body again. In these cases, your doctor will refer you to a specialist for treatment. This is why it is important to tell new members of your healthcare team that you had hepatitis B.
Protected (because of vaccine)	You have never been infected with hepatitis B. You are immunized and protected.
At risk	You are not infected and have not been exposed to hepatitis B. You don't have any protection against the hepatitis B virus (HBV). You are at risk of getting hepatitis B. Your healthcare provider will recommend getting the hepatitis B vaccine series. **Getting the vaccine series is the best way to prevent getting hepatitis B.**
Infected	You are infected with hepatitis B.

Helpful tools and resources on next page.

Helpful tools and resources

You may find some of your results and health information using secure online tools:

MyHealth Records
See your lab results, immunizations, and some other results with a MyHealth Records account. Sign up at myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords.

MyAHS Connect
See your health information, manage your Alberta Health Services appointments, and interact directly with some members of your healthcare team. Ask your healthcare provider how to access your MyAHS Connect account. Learn more at ahs.ca/myahsconnect.

Treatment and management of chronic (long-term) hepatitis B

If you have chronic hepatitis B, your healthcare provider will refer you to a specialist. Depending on where you live, you may be referred to a hepatologist (liver specialist), infectious disease specialist, or a gastroenterologist (specializes in all organs of the digestive system, which includes the liver).

Your specialist will look at the results from your blood work and have a conversation with you to determine how to best manage your hepatitis B, including whether antiviral medicines are a good option for you. Not everyone with chronic hepatitis B needs antiviral medicines. People with chronic hepatitis B can live long and active lives by taking good care of themselves and having regular appointments to watch for liver issues.

Antiviral medicines for chronic hepatitis B:

For those who develop chronic hepatitis B, antiviral medicine may be an option for you, depending on how active the virus is, your liver enzyme (ALT) levels, and your risk or amount of liver damage.

- Antiviral medicines stop or slow HBV growth and help protect the liver from more serious damage.
- Some antivirals, called Nucleoside analogs, are pills that are taken once a day, usually for many years.
- Some medicines, called interferons, require injections. Interferons are usually given once per week for 12 months.
- In rare cases, antiviral medicines can have severe side effects.
- There may be a cost for these medicines. You may be able to get your medicine covered by your drug plan. Phone your benefits provider or speak with your doctor to learn what coverage options are available.
- With any treatment for hepatitis B, there is a chance it will come back once you have stopped treatment.
- Never stop taking your medicine unless your health provider recommends it.
- There are new drugs being tested and hopefully there will be a cure for hepatitis B in the future. Information is available from the Hepatitis B Foundation: www.hepb.org/treatment-and-management/drug-watch-3.

A word of caution

You may see advertisements that recommend specific herbal treatments, supplements and cleansing diets to cure your liver. These treatments are often not tested or approved, so they can do more harm than good. They also don't repair liver damage. If you have seen an advertisement that you have questions about, talk to your healthcare provider first.

Travelling Tip: Always pack your medicine in your carry-on bag. This makes sure you have access to them if your checked luggage is lost or delayed. Speak with your pharmacist about packing extra medicine in case of travel delays and unexpected situations.

If you are travelling to an area where hepatitis A is common and you haven't received the hepatitis A vaccine series, talk to your healthcare team about getting it. The hepatitis A vaccine series is recommended for those with hepatitis B because having both infections (hepatitis A and B) together can lead to liver failure. See hep A vaccine information here.

Asking the following questions can help you make an informed decision about your medicine options:

"What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?"

"Can I use any of these options together?"

"How will this make me feel? Will it have side effects?"

"What results can I expect?"

You and your specialist may decide starting antiviral medicines is a good option for you. Watching your symptoms is important. Call your specialist or Health Link at 811 if you have any concerns. You might feel like you don't want to bother your healthcare team, but no detail is too small to share. If it matters to you, it will matter to your healthcare team.

You can clarify with your healthcare team what to expect in terms of follow-up communication. Connect with your healthcare team whenever you:

- Have questions
- Notice your symptoms getting worse
- Have problems with your medicine
- Haven't gotten test results or heard back about an appointment in the time you had agreed to

Helpful tools and resources

To learn about how to prepare for your specialist appointment, check out the QuRE Patient and Caregiver Journal by visiting ahs.ca/qure.

Keep taking care of yourself and learn how to protect others

Having a chronic condition can feel stressful and overwhelming. But there are things you can do to take care of yourself and protect your household and sexual contacts so that you can live a full, meaningful life and do the things that are important to you. A positive mindset will empower you to work with your healthcare team to make helpful lifestyle choices and maintain your quality of life.

Keeping your liver as healthy as possible is important when managing hepatitis B. When your liver has damage, it has to work harder, making you feel more easily tired and weak. Your emotional well-being is also important. Consider the following things you can do to protect your liver and improve your whole-person health.

You can make an impact for others

You have an opportunity to use your voice to teach others about hepatitis B and clarify misunderstandings and myths. Be an ambassador for the hepatitis B community. Spread the word and encourage others to get the vaccine for hepatitis B, as this is the best way to prevent hepatitis B infection.

Remember, you are not alone in this journey. Globally, there are 300 million people living with chronic hepatitis B.

Food and drink:

- Follow Canada's Food Guide: food-guide.canada.ca.
- Eat whole, unprocessed foods: Like fruit, whole grains, fish, lean meats, and vegetables. Certain vegetables, called "cruciferous vegetables" (for example, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage), help protect the liver from chemicals in the environment.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about vitamin D and calcium supplements: People with liver disease can develop weak bones. Getting enough vitamin D and calcium from food or supplements (if needed) can help keep bones strong.
- Limit foods with saturated fats: Like fatty meats, butter, ghee, cheese.
- Limit foods with added sugar: Like fruit juices, sodas, candy.

Alcohol and smoking:

- Minimize alcohol: Alcohol is hard on the liver and can cause liver damage.
- Cut back or quit smoking: Smoking is hard on the liver and can cause liver damage.

Activity:

- Try to be active every day (even standing counts) and get enough sleep.
- For specific recommendations on activity and sleep based on your age, visit csepguidelines.ca.

Manage stress:

- Consider healthy ways to manage your stress. Make time for your hobbies and try to add them into your routine. Examples include reading, meditating, spending time with loved ones, journalling, or walking.
- You are not alone. Consider the following resources to support your emotional well-being:
  - Your healthcare team
  - Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
  - Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741
  - Crisis Services Canada: 988, or visit www.talksuicide.ca
  - Visit www.hepb.org/resources-and-support/online-support-groups to find online support groups for people living with hepatitis B.

Do you have children or a pregnant family member with hepatitis B?

Learn more about hepatitis B in these groups.

Children and hepatitis B:

- www.hepb.org/treatment-and-management/children-with-hepatitis-b
- myhealth.alberta.ca, search "Hepatitis B in children" in the search bar
- www.catie.ca/hepatitis-b

Pregnancy and hepatitis B:

- www.hepb.org/treatment-and-management/pregnancy-and-hbv
- myhealth.alberta.ca, search "Hepatitis B in pregnancy" in the search bar
- www.catie.ca/hepatitis-b

If you have chronic hepatitis B, have regular check-ups with your healthcare team:

- It is important to have regular check-ups and to make sure you get your blood work and other tests (for example, ultrasounds) on a regular basis. Keeping a close eye on your blood work helps your specialist understand the status of your hepatitis B infection and your liver health.
- Skipping or delaying check-ups puts you at risk of missing critical changes in your liver health, which can delay life-saving interventions. Keep reminders about your check-ups in your phone or calendar. Take into account your next check-up time when planning travel.
- Always check with your healthcare providers before taking new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal medicines because many medicines are filtered through the liver.

Protecting you and others

There are steps you can take to make sure you don't spread the hepatitis B virus (HBV).

Important Immunizations:

Hepatitis B vaccine:

- The best way to prevent spreading hepatitis B to others is to make sure they are immunized against HBV.
- It is important to get the full series of hepatitis B vaccines, which includes 2-3 vaccines in total (over time), depending on age, to make sure you are protected long-term.
- The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective. If you are healthy and get all the recommended doses, the protection for hepatitis B is 95% to 100%.
- The cost of the hepatitis B vaccine is covered in the following cases:
  - As part of the routine immunization schedule for infants and children in Alberta.
  - If your child missed their hepatitis B vaccine as a baby, they can get the vaccine (with your permission) through the Public Health School Immunization Program. Learn more: myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/school.aspx.
  - If you were born in or after 1982 and didn't get the vaccine series before.
  - If you are a close contact of a person who is infected with hepatitis B.
  - If you were exposed to hepatitis B and are within the window to get post-exposure prophylaxis (preventative) treatment.

Even if you don't fit into any of the above categories, you can still get the vaccine series at a cost. Call 811 to talk to a public health nurse to find out if you can get the hepatitis B vaccine for free.

Hepatitis A vaccine:

- If you have hepatitis B, it is recommended to get the hepatitis A vaccine series. Most people with hepatitis A recover, but if you also have hepatitis B, it could cause severe infection and lead to liver failure. The cost of the hepatitis A vaccine is covered if you have hepatitis B.
- Most people need 2 doses of the hepatitis A vaccine, 6 months apart.
- For more information and to find a public health centre near you, visit: myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/hepatitis-a-vaccine.aspx

Pneumococcal vaccine:

- If you have hepatitis B, you are at a higher risk of getting serious pneumococcal disease, so it is recommended that you get the pneumococcal vaccine.
- Learn more about pneumococcal disease and the vaccine: myhealth.alberta.ca/topic/immunization/pages/pneumococcal.aspx

Preventing spread of HBV:

- Avoid unprotected sex if your partner is not immunized. Use latex or polyurethane condoms.
- Don't share items that might have small amounts of blood on them, like razors, needles, nail clippers, tooth brushes, earrings, or body jewelry.
- Make sure you keep all cuts and open sores covered.
- Use lotion to help prevent dry, cracked, or broken skin, which can expose others to your blood.
- Take extra care when cleaning blood spills and disposing of items with blood on them, like sanitary napkins, tampons, and tissues.

Remember:

Practices to prevent the spread of HBV, like the ones listed in the list to the left, are important to help prevent the spread of blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections, including hepatitis B. The best way to prevent the spread of hepatitis B is by getting immunized. If you are healthy and get all the recommended doses, the protection for hepatitis B is 95% to 100%.

Helpful tools and resources

Find programs and resources in your community:

211 connects Albertans to the programs and resources they need, anytime, day or night. Whether you're looking for help with mental health, financial assistance, basic needs or other challenges, 211 is here to help you find supports. It's free, confidential, and available in over 170 languages by phone, making it easy to access help when you need it.

To connect with **211 Alberta**:

- Call 211
- Text INFO to 211
- Chat or search at ab.211.ca

The **Alberta Healthy Living Program** offers free workshops, classes, and supervised exercise and nutrition services to adults living with a variety of chronic conditions and diseases. Many education classes and workshops are available province wide. Learn more by visiting ahs.ca/ahlp.

Chronic Disease Management support: ahs.ca/cdm

Health Information & Tools: myhealth.alberta.ca/Pages/HealthInfoToolsDefault.aspx

Resources

There's lots of information out there, and it can be confusing to know what information is accurate and true. Here are some great resources about hepatitis B that may be helpful for you.

- Alberta Drug Benefit list: www.alberta.ca/drug-benefit-list-and-drug-review-process
- CATIE website: www.catie.ca/hepatitis-b
  - Offers helpful information about hepatitis B, including treatment, prevention, living well with hepatitis B, who should get tested, and immunization.
- Government of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/hepatitis-b.html
- Hepatitis B Foundation: www.hepb.org
  - This site offers a lot of information about what is hepatitis B, prevention, diagnosis, and management. It also offers patient resources, online learning, and support options for those with hepatitis B.
  - Printable fact sheets (available in different languages): www.hepb.org/resources-and-support/fact-sheets
- Liver Canada: www.liver.ca/patients-caregivers/liver-diseases/hepatitis-b
  - Find useful links, education, articles, recipes and more that can help with understanding and managing hepatitis B.
- MyHealth Alberta: myhealth.alberta.ca/, search "Hepatitis B" in the search bar
  - Find information on hepatitis B basics, treatments, vaccine information, and more.
- Vaccine information sites:
  - School Immunization Program: myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/school.aspx
  - Routine Immunization Program: myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/routine-schedule.aspx
  - Public Health Centres: Locations across Alberta: www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page17791.aspx
  - MyHealth Alberta: myhealth.alberta.ca - in the search bar, search for the vaccine you are interested in learning more about (like hepatitis B, hepatitis A)

Helpful tip

If you can't print this resource at home, ask a family member, friend, or your healthcare provider to print it for you. You can also use a computer and printer at your local library.

Other related resources:

- www.Cirrhosiscare.ca:
  - This website has a "Patients and Families" section that offers information on cirrhosis, healthy living resources (like advanced care planning, alcohol, nutrition resources), and support resources for Albertans (like housing and food resources, employment and financial benefits).

- 24-hour Movement Guidelines: www.csepguidelines.ca
- Prescription to get active: www.prescriptiontogetactive.com

Get help now:

- **Emergency: Call 911**
- Health Link: Call 811

Mental health, addiction, and crisis support:

- 811 or Addiction Helpline: 1-866-332-2322
- 811 or Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
- Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741
- Crisis Services Canada: Call 988, or visit www.talksuicide.ca
- Office of Mental Health Patient Advocates: alberta.ca/office-of-alberta-health-advocates.aspx

Community and social supports:

- 211 Alberta: Call 211, or visit ab.211.ca
- Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818, or visit alberta.ca/family-violence-find-supports.aspx
- Income Support: 1-866-644-5135, or visit alberta.ca/income-support.aspx

Alberta Health Services programs:

- Home Care: ahs.ca/homecare
- Find a Dietitian: ahs.ca/nutrition
  - Health Link has dietitians to answer nutrition questions. Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete the self-referral form on ahs.ca/811.
- Spiritual Care Services: ahs.ca/spiritualcare

Primary care (family doctors):

- Find a doctor or nurse practitioner: ahs.ca/findadoctor
- Virtual care guide: ahs.ca/virtualhealth

Patient concerns and feedback:

- Office of Alberta Health Advocates: alberta.ca/office-of-alberta-health-advocates.aspx
  - Offers coaching to help you advocate for yourself in the health system, and support to learn how the health system works and how to navigate through it.
- Alberta Health Services Patient Relations: 1-855-550-2555, or visit ahs.ca/patientfeedback

Important phone numbers

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

Notes

Use this space to take notes.

Background

About this Pathway

The Provincial Pathways Unit co- developed this patient pathway in partnership with patient and family advisors, hepatologists, infectious disease specialists, family physicians, and Alberta Precision Laboratory. A special thank you to Public Health for their consultative support.

It is current as of April 2025.

Authors & Conflict of Interest Declaration

This pathway was reviewed and revised by:

Co-Design Team Project Membership	
Name	**Organization**
Analicia Bozzo	Consultant, Provincial Pathways Unit
Dr. Julia Carter	Family Physician, Calgary Zone
Dr. Carmen Charlton	Clinical Microbiologist, ProvLab
Dr. Carla Coffin	Specialty Physician, Calgary Zone
Dr. Stephen Congly	Specialty Physician, Calgary Zone
Dr. Karen Doucette	Specialty Physician, Edmonton Zone
Maurice Fritze	Patient and Family Advisor, Central Zone
Chris McIntosh	Senior Consultant, Provincial Pathways Unit
Dr. Catherine Scrimshaw	Family Physician, South Zone
Biniam Soquar	Patient and Family Advisor, Calgary Zone
Dr. Rachel Talavlikar	Family Physician, Calgary Zone
Dr. Hong Yuan Zhou	Medical Microbiologist, ProvLab

Pathway Review Process

Patient pathways undergo scheduled review every three years, or earlier if there is a clinically significant change in knowledge or practice. The next scheduled review is July 2028. However, we welcome feedback at any time. Please send us your feedback here.

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Disclaimer

This pathway represents evidence-based best practice but does not override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to their patients using their own clinical judgment given their patients' specific clinical conditions, in consultation with patients/alternate decision makers. The pathway is not a substitute for clinical judgment or advice of a qualified healthcare professional. It is expected that all users will seek advice of other appropriately qualified and regulated healthcare providers with any issues transcending their specific knowledge, scope of regulated practice or professional competence.