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Endoscopy

Gastrointestinal Medicine

Nutrition

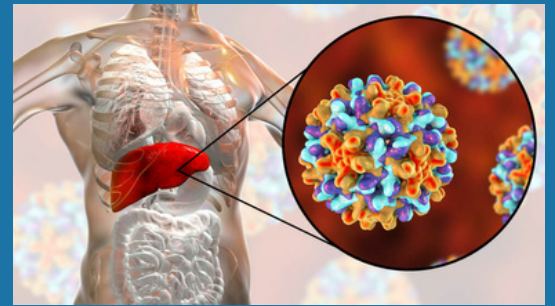


The Centre for GI Health

HEPATITIS B

Chronic hepatitis B is caused by the HBV virus (hepatitis B virus).

- Approximately 1% of the Australian population suffers from chronic hepatitis B.
- Only 70% of those are diagnosed.



SCREENING & TRANSMISSION

HBV virus can be spread by blood (sharing needles, toothbrushes, razors, needlestick injury), sex & vertical transmission (mother to baby).

Acute hepatitis B is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the hepatitis B virus. Some people with acute hepatitis B have no symptoms at all or only mild illness. For others, acute hepatitis B causes a more severe illness that requires hospitalisation.

Those that did not clear the virus within 6 months developed chronic hepatitis B.

Many people with chronic hepatitis B don't know they are infected with the virus because they don't feel or look sick. However, they can still spread the virus to others.

ASSESSMENT

- Blood tests including LFT (liver function test), FBE (full blood examination), INR (clotting time)
- Hep B serologies plus HBV viral load
- Ultrasound of abdomen
- Fibroscan of liver (to assess the degree of liver injury)
- Chronic hepatitis B can lead to liver cirrhosis (hardening of the liver) and liver cancer in some people.

WHO SHOULD BE TESTED?

- People born in certain countries (Asia Pacific, Africa & Eastern Europe) where hepatitis B is common
- People born in Australia not vaccinated as infants whose parents were born in countries with high rates of hepatitis B
- Men who have sex with men
- People who inject drugs
- People with HIV
- Household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B
- People requiring immunosuppressive therapy
- People with end-stage renal disease (including people on dialysis) • People with hepatitis C
- People with elevated ALT levels
- Pregnant women
- Infants born to mothers with hepatitis B

MANAGEMENT

- Vaccination can prevent contracting hepatitis B
- Vaccines are highly effective.
- Treatments are available to those who are eligible under Medicare /RPBS guidelines. Oral antivirals (like Entecavir or Tenofovir) are highly effective at suppressing the virus with minimal side effects. However, they may need to be taken for a few years.