How can I find out if I have chronic hepatitis B?

Many people who have chronic hepatitis B do not feel sick and may not know that they have it.

The only way to know if you are infected with chronic hepatitis B is to get tested. Not all blood tests check for chronic hepatitis B. So make sure to ask your doctor about getting tested for chronic hepatitis B if you are unsure.

People of all ages should get tested, especially those from an area where there is a high prevalence of hepatitis B (like Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Pacific Islands, the Middle East, the Amazon Basin, the former Soviet Union, and rural Alaska).
Hepatitis B is passed from one infected person to another through infected blood. Some of the most common ways include:

- Mothers passing the virus to their baby during birth
- Having unprotected sex with an infected person
- Using unsterilized needles for tattoos, body piercings, injection drugs, or acupuncture
- Sharing razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items that may come in contact with infected blood

You cannot spread the virus through hugging, kissing, sharing utensils, clothes, or food.

How is hepatitis B spread?

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How can I protect myself and my family from hepatitis B?

One of the best ways to prevent hepatitis B infection is through testing and vaccination. Getting vaccinated can protect people who have never been infected from getting the hepatitis B virus. The only way to know whether or not you are currently infected with the hepatitis B virus is to get tested. The vaccine is only effective for people who currently do not have the virus.

What should I do if I have been diagnosed with chronic hepatitis B?

While there is no cure for chronic hepatitis B, there are effective treatments available to help prevent long-term health problems. People with chronic hepatitis B should see a doctor regularly. You should also check with your doctor before taking any prescription pills or over-the-counter medications (including herbal medicine and vitamins), as they can potentially damage the liver. Alcohol should be avoided, since it can damage the liver. Quitting smoking can also help reduce the risk of developing liver problems in the future. If you have chronic hepatitis B, talk to your family about getting tested and vaccinated to help prevent them from getting hepatitis B.