



Hepatitis B contact tracing

Information for people identified as close contacts

What is hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is the name for a virus that is carried in the blood and body fluids. This virus can cause damage to your liver. The virus can be passed from person to person via blood, semen or vaginal fluids. Please see links at end for more information about hepatitis B.

What are the symptoms of acute hepatitis B?

Many people only have mild symptoms, but more severe symptoms include:

- feeling sick
- being sick
- lack of appetite
- flu-like symptoms, such as tiredness, general aches and pains, and headaches
- yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)

How long do symptoms take to appear?

It usually takes around 3 months after the virus enters the body before symptoms of acute infection appear. Most adults fully recover from acute hepatitis B but a small number will go on to have chronic (long-lasting) hepatitis B where

the infection lasts beyond 6 months and can be lifelong. People with chronic hepatitis B infection will usually not have any symptoms for years but the virus may cause damage to the liver and increases their risk of developing liver cirrhosis (scarring) and liver cancer.

What is contact tracing and why do we do it?

Anyone living with hepatitis B (whether they have an acute or chronic infection) can pass this virus on to others in close contact with them, via blood, semen or vaginal fluids.

Hepatitis B vaccine has recently been introduced into the UK routine immunisation schedule for infants. This means many adults and older children may not have been given the vaccine. Hepatitis B vaccine is highly safe and effective at protecting against this virus.

By identifying people in close contact with someone living with hepatitis B, contacting and helping arrange testing and vaccination, we can help prevent them getting hepatitis B.

There is no risk of infection from social contact so visitors and friends do not need protection. The virus is not passed on during normal social contact such as holding hands, hugging, kissing or sharing plates, cups or cutlery. It is also not spread through contaminated food or water.

Should I get tested?

If someone close to you has recently been told they have hepatitis B then we would recommend you are tested for and vaccinated against hepatitis B.

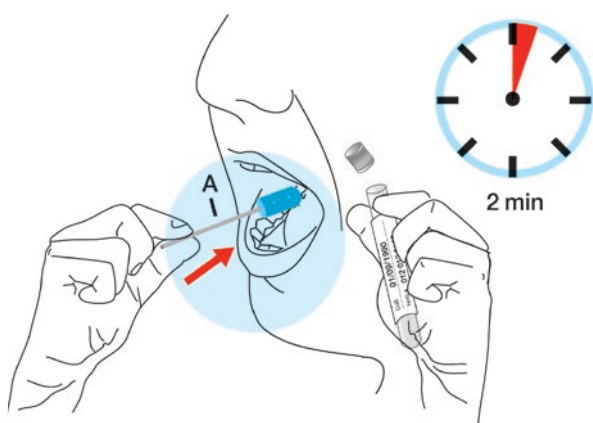
This includes:

- people who share (live in) your household, for example as part of a family unit
- people you have sex with

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is running a pilot scheme to contact people close to those diagnosed with hepatitis B, who may be at risk of acquiring this, to arrange home testing and help with the process of arranging a free vaccine via their GP.

Representatives from UKHSA are contacting those who have been identified as close contacts by telephone in two areas, Birmingham and North London. If you agree, you will be sent an Oral Fluid Test kit for hepatitis B (a test taken by using a swab to collect saliva in their mouth) as well as advice regarding vaccination. You will be contacted once the test results are back and advised if any further steps are necessary.

Please see this pictogram on how the oral fluid tests are taken:



How do we use and share your data?

Your personal information and test results will only be shared between UKHSA, you and your GP or specialist doctors if required. This sharing of personal data is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Do I have to take part in this project?

No, you can choose not to take part, and you will be given an option for a call back if you change your mind. We would encourage you to take part to help you access testing and be protected against hepatitis B by vaccination.

If you do not wish to take part, you can attend your GP explaining you are in close contact with someone living with hepatitis B, and would like testing and vaccination (your nearest practice can be found via the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp if you are not registered).

Not participating does not affect your rights and entitlements to NHS health care.

More information:

- Hepatitis B – HepB Companion – **Language Guides**
- Hepatitis B – NHS (www.nhs.uk) – www.nhs.uk/conditions/hepatitis-b