

# How to look after your liver

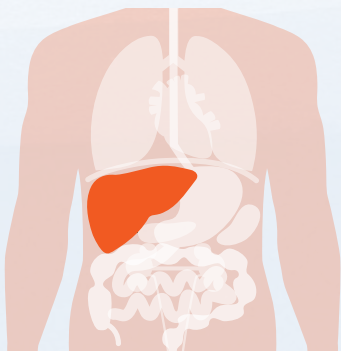
Hepatitis B and the importance of regular blood tests



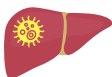
Know it. Test it. Treat it.

## WHY IS THE LIVER IMPORTANT?

The liver is the largest organ in the body. It has more than 500 functions, including fighting infection, filtering waste products, aiding digestion, storing sugar, iron and vitamins to give your body energy, and helping with blood clotting.



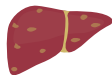
## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HEPATITIS B ENTERS THE BODY?



Virus enters the body and infects the liver cells



Immune system tries to kill infected liver cells



Inflammation and scarring

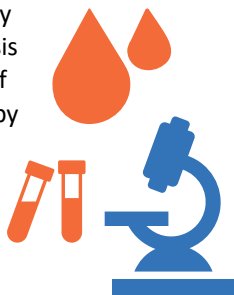


Mild, moderate or severe fibrosis, cirrhosis, serious liver disease

**A chronic infection occurs if the virus has been in the body for more than six months.**

## BLOOD TESTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE WITH HEPATITIS B

Six-monthly blood tests pick up early signs of liver disease such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. Up to 70 percent of your liver can already be damaged by the time you start to feel ill. You may not notice any symptoms from hepatitis B. This is why regular blood tests are very important.



## WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR BLOOD TEST

- Drink plenty of water before the blood test, so it's easier to collect blood from the vein
- You can eat before a blood test
- Make sure you are warm. Wear a top with sleeves that are easy to roll up
- Your blood test form does not expire. Please try to have your test as soon as you receive your form
- Tell the nurse if you don't feel comfortable having a blood test, if you have ever fainted or are likely to faint during the blood test.

If you lose your blood test form, call us on 0800 33 20 10 and let us know. We can arrange for a new blood test form to be sent to you or faxed to the lab.

If you have a close family member who has been diagnosed with hepatitis B-related liver cancer (HCC), you will need six-monthly ultrasounds, as you will have a higher risk of liver cancer. This is treatable if detected early.

## WHO DO I TELL ABOUT MY DIAGNOSIS?

Your hepatitis B test result is personal. You do not have to tell anyone, but you do need to take care not to spread hepatitis B to others. Hepatitis B is not spread through sneezing, coughing, shaking hands, hugs, preparing food for others or sharing cooking or eating utensils.

### HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

It is illegal to discriminate against people who have hepatitis. You can't be dismissed from employment or accommodation, refused medical, hospital or dental treatment, or refused service at shops, businesses, restaurants or service providers.

## HOW TO AVOID SPREADING THE VIRUS

- Cover open sores or cuts
- Clean any spilt blood with household bleach
- Do not donate blood
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes or use unsterilised equipment for drug-taking, tattooing or piercings.



 Don't share:



# How to look after your liver



**Have regular blood tests**

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**Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol significantly increases your risk of serious liver damage. If you do drink, limit your intake to two standard drinks a day for women or three standard drinks a day for men. Have two alcohol-free days a week

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**Reduce or stop smoking cigarettes**

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**Do not use cannabis.** Its use is associated with more fibrosis (liver disease)

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**Discuss using herbal/alternative medicine** with your doctor/pharmacist, as some may affect your liver

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**Avoid fatty/sugary drinks and foods,** as they can contribute to various conditions that can advance liver disease, for example fatty liver

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**Keep within a healthy weight range**

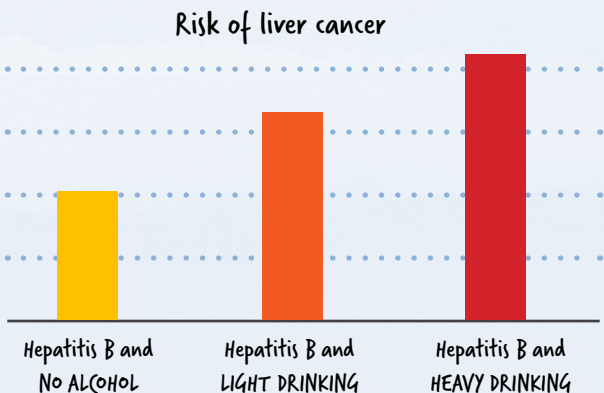
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**Drinking kava should also be avoided** as it may cause more liver damage. Ask your health care professional if you have any questions.

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# DRINKING ALCOHOL IF YOU HAVE HEPATITIS B INCREASES YOUR RISK OF LIVER CANCER



LIGHT DRINKING: Four drinks a week

HEAVY DRINKING: Six drinks a day for men,  
or four drinks a day for women



**The Hepatitis Foundation  
of New Zealand**

Phone: 0800 33 20 10  
PO Box 647, Whakatāne, New Zealand

[www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz](http://www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz)