FIVE IMPORTANT THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS B

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1. Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. The virus is the **number one** global cause of severe liver damage (cirrhosis) and liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma).
2. The hepatitis B virus is transmitted by direct (very close) contact with **blood** and certain **body fluids** of an infected person. Most people who have a chronic (or life-long infection) are infected as infants (transmitted during childbirth) or in early childhood.
3. Hepatitis B is a **silent** epidemic. Most people living with life-long hepatitis B have no symptoms. It is important that you ask your health care provider if you should get tested for hepatitis B. Testing is the only way to know if you have hepatitis B and whether you need treatment.
4. Hepatitis B is **preventable**. There is a vaccine that can protect you against hepatitis B. All babies should be vaccinated because very young infants are at the highest risk of developing a life-long infection if they are exposed.
5. Hepatitis B is **treatable**. There are very good drugs that cannot cure but they can help prevent development of severe liver disease. You can work in any occupation, have a family, and expect to enjoy a normal, long and healthy life. There is hope that someday we will find a cure for hepatitis B.