

Fact Sheet

Hepatitis B Virus

Pathogenicity: Onset is insidious with anorexia, vague abdominal discomfort, nausea and vomiting often progressing to jaundice. Fever may be absent or mild. Severity ranges from unapparent cases to fatal acute hepatic necrosis.

Mode of Transmission: Percutaneous or permucosal exposure to infectious body fluids. Commonly spread by contaminated needles, syringes and other IV equipment; contamination of wounds or lacerations; exposure of mucous membranes; sexual contact.

Incubation Period: Usually 45-180 days; average 60-90 days. Antibodies appear in 2 weeks or rarely in 6-9 months.

Communicability: Blood can be infective weeks before onset of symptoms and remains infective through clinical and chronic carrier state. Infectivity of chronically infected individuals varies from highly infectious to sparingly infectious.

Susceptibility to Disinfectants: Susceptible to many disinfectants; 1% sodium hypochlorite; 70% ethanol; 2% glutaraldehyde, formaldehyde.

Treatment: HBV vaccine.