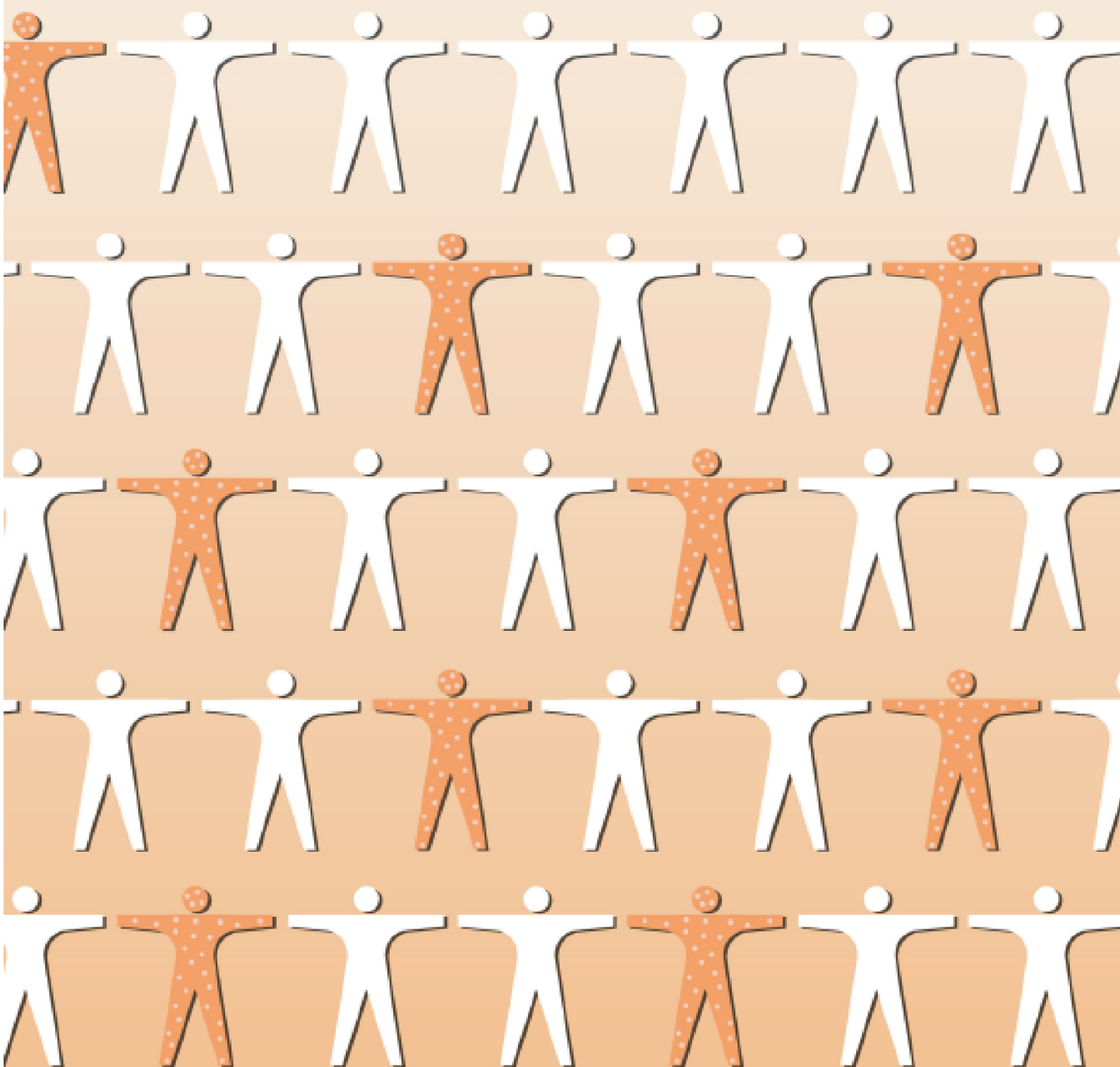


# Hepatitis B Carrier



## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B (HBV) is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver.

If symptoms occur, they might include:

- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Dark urine
- Fatigue
- Nausea; vomiting
- Abdominal pain



## Epidemiology



HBV infection occurs throughout the world. It is estimated that more than 2 billion people have been infected, of which more than 350 million have chronic life-long hepatitis B infection.

In Southeast Asia including Hong Kong, the overall prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection is high (>8%).

## Transmission

Contact through BLOOD and BODY FLUID may lead to infection. HBV is spread:

- From the infected mother to her baby during birth;
- Through unsafe sex, such as having sex with an infected partner without using a condom;
- By sharing needles or other injecting equipment when “shooting” drug;
- Through needlestick or sharp exposures on the job.

Daily contact such as hugging and dining together **DO NOT** spread HBV infection.

## What Does the Term “ Hepatitis B Carrier” Mean?



- “Hepatitis B carrier” is a term used to indicate people who have persistence of hepatitis B surface antigen in the blood for more than 6 months. Most of them show no symptom and have normal liver function.
- However, these apparently healthy hepatitis B carriers can infect other people without knowing it.
- About a quarter of the carriers would develop chronic hepatitis and are at increased risk of having serious liver disease including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

## Avoid Transmitting the Virus to Other People

- In case of bleeding or trauma on the skin, the wounds should be dressed properly.
- Items contaminated by the carrier’s blood should be disinfected with **bleach**.
  - ✘ Contaminated clothing: add **1** unit of bleach to **49** units of water. Immerse the item in into the antiseptic solution for 30 minutes before washing.
  - ✘ Contaminated furniture or toilet seat: add **1** unit of bleach to **4** units of water. Use the solution to disinfect the stain.
- Make sure non-immune household members and sexual partner are **vaccinated** against hepatitis B.
- Babies born to hepatitis B carrier mothers should receive hepatitis B vaccine along with **Hepatitis B Immunoglobulin (HBIG)** immediately after birth.
- Practice '**Safer Sex**', i.e. proper use of latex condom in sexual intercourse.
- Do not share needles or any other injecting equipment with others.
- Do not share personal care items, such as toothbrush, razor and nail scissor.
- Do not donate blood, sperm or other body organs.

## Personal health



- Have balanced diet, adequate sleep, and regular exercises. These increase the body's resistance against diseases.
- Avoid alcohol and over-the-counter medicines that might damage the liver.
- Regular body check by your doctor. The tests may include:
  - ✘ Blood test for liver function and alpha-fetoprotein;
  - ✘ Ultrasonographic liver examination to detect changes in the liver whereby early treatment could be possible.

## Treatment of chronic hepatitis B

- The majority of chronic HBV carriers do not develop chronic hepatitis and do not require treatment.
- Some antiviral drugs are able to suppress HBV replication and thereby reduce virus-induced liver damage of chronic hepatitis B infection. Examples of these drugs are :



- ✘ Lamivudine
  - ✘ Interferon alfa
  - ✘ Pegylated interferon alfa
  - ✘ Adefovir dipivoxil
  - ✘ Entecavir
- Consult your doctors for the appropriateness of these drugs.

**Hepatitis Hotline : 2112 9911**

**Website: [www.hepatitis.gov.hk](http://www.hepatitis.gov.hk)**



This pamphlet is produced by Viral Hepatitis Preventive Service, Special Preventive Programme, Department of Health