

Hepatitis B Screening Guide for Persons Who Use Drugs (PWUD)

A comprehensive guide to implementing community-based hepatitis B (HBV) screening programs in the harm reduction space



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that every adult be tested for hepatitis B at least once in their lifetime!

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Hep B Quick Facts

- Hepatitis B is a leading cause of liver cancer.
- Up to 2.4 million people in the United States are living with hepatitis B.
 - Most people don't know they are infected.
- There are good treatments available for hepatitis B.
- A simple blood test can save a life!

ALL ADULTS SHOULD BE TESTED FOR HEPATITIS B AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFE

Transmission Routes

- Blood to blood contact
- Sexual contact
- Sharing needles
- Sharing razors, toothbrushes, or any other sharp objects
- Sharing paraphernalia including needles, snorters, cookers, and pipes



Screening

- Hepatitis B is diagnosed using a blood test that consists of 3 lab tests:
 - HBsAg, HBsAb, and HBcAb
- Screening can determine if an individual is living with the virus, protected against the virus, or was exposed to the virus and at risk for reactivation at a later point in life
- **Hepatitis B testing is recommended for all adults 18 years or older**

Prevention

- There is a safe and effective vaccine series for hepatitis B for children and adults
- **All infants, children, and adults 18 years of age or older should get the hepatitis B vaccine**



Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer

- Hepatitis B is the most common cause of liver cancer
- The hepatitis B vaccine is an anti-cancer vaccine
- For those who have been diagnosed with hepatitis B, the risk of developing liver cancer is higher, but can be reduced with antiviral treatment, medical monitoring and liver cancer surveillance.



What to test for: HBV Screening

Interpretation & Action Needed	HBsAg Hepatitis B Surface Antigen	HBsAb (anti-HBs) Hepatitis B Surface Antibody	HBcAb (anti-HBc) Hepatitis B Core Antibody
Not Immune - Not Protected Not infected but still at risk. <u>Vaccine needed.</u>	—	—	—
Immune controlled - Protected Recovered from a previous infection. <u>No vaccine needed.</u>	—	+	+
Immune - Protected Not infected and no prior infection. <u>Vaccinated.</u>	—	+	—
Infected Current infection and transmissible. <u>More testing needed.</u>	+	—	+
Exposed Prior exposure to the virus. <u>More testing needed.</u>	—	—	+

Action Steps

- 1 Get Vaccinated!**
 For anyone negative for surface antibodies, it is important to get vaccinated for hepatitis B. Not everyone is vaccinated in childhood, so it is very important to learn about your vaccination status!
- 2 Follow-up with Provider**
 For those who are HBsAg-positive, more testing needs to be done. It's important to follow up with a healthcare provider to determine if the infection is chronic, as well as treatment options.
- 3 Monitor for Reactivation**
 In rare cases, for someone who is HBcAb-positive, hepatitis B reactivation may occur so having this as part of your medical history is important. Check out the reactivation guide to learn more.

Screening Events

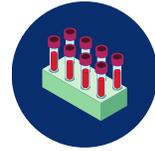


Establish Partnerships with Health care Providers and Physicians

Linkage to care is essential. Locate providers and physicians who will be able to establish a standing order for screenings and referral if positive.

Establish a Lab Partner to Run Diagnostics

Commercial labs like Quest and LabCorp can be starting points. Additionally, **it is critical to secure a skilled phlebotomist**, as drawing blood can be difficult.



Establish Linkage to Care Sites

Consider language preferences for your target communities. Ensure the locations and travel accessibility of community members. Have a safety net clinic for individuals without insurance or who are underinsured. Find an FQHC in your area that can provide comprehensive health care:

<https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>

Identify Community Partners



It's important to find hosting sites for screening events. This includes churches, refugee resettlement organizations, shelters, syringe exchange sites, and community centers. Asking if you could provide education or screening is a great first step but remember - trust is important and it might take time to develop relationships.





Schedule Screenings

Try to schedule events to accommodate the community you are screening. Utilize social media, community partners, and other stakeholders to promote the event and increase participation in screenings.



Host the Screening Event

Consider volunteers, especially multilingual partners, to help with translations. Utilize the Hepatitis B Foundation's resources available for free online.



Examine and Interpret Lab Results

It's critical for healthcare providers, community health workers, and others participating in screening events to be able to understand how to interpret lab results for hepatitis B testing.



Share Results

PWUD communities may not always have a permanent address or mailbox to send results. It might be helpful to schedule a time to come back to the place of screening to explain results to each individual in a one-on-one setting. Remember that it is crucial to protect the health information of patients as outlined in the HIPPA policy. Emailing or texting results is not advised as it is not HIPPA compliant.

Screening Materials:

- Lab forms
- Blood draw supplies
- Demographic information forms
 - Screening forms
- Informed consent
 - Must have informed consent if you are collecting data
- Education materials like fact sheets and flyers
 - Including reminders to come back for results



Sample Questions



Consent

The consent form should include a comprehensive review of the project and must outline the risks and benefits of participating in research. It is important that participation is voluntary and consent is given before beginning research (e.g. drawing blood, asking other questions, etc.). Consent needs to be verbal and must also include a signature.

- Do not ask for consent if the participant is not fully alert or conscious.
- Review the goals and objectives of the research with the participants and ask if they have any additional questions
- Consent can be revoked at any time by the participant.



Demographics, Behaviors, and Lifestyle Choices

These question topics are beneficial to understanding the community demographics and determining any trends or patterns that may be useful to take into account when developing public health programs to address hepatitis B in the community. It is important to understand lifestyle choices and individual behaviors as they can provide critical information on risk factors. The following are important topics to consider for research purposes:

- What is your educational background?
- What is your date of birth?
- Do you have health insurance?
- What is your racial, or ethnic background, and country of origin?
- Do you have a history of drug use?
- Have you ever been tested for hepatitis A, B, C or D?
- Have you had unprotected sex in the last 6 months?



Suggestions

Incentivizing Participation

- Many individuals in the PWUD community are unhoused and financially unstable. Providing monetary incentives may be beneficial in increasing the uptake of screening services. It's important to not promote or advertise the monetary incentives in an unethical manner (e.g. do not say "You can get \$20 if you give blood"). This is a protected population and it's critical to promote the importance of getting the screening for health reasons and not as a way to make money.
 - Additionally, it may be useful to provide other incentives such as water, Gatorade, or food to increase willingness to participate and provide relief to a community undergoing food insecurity or lack of access to food and water.
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Skilled Phlebotomy

- Injection drug use can make it difficult for providers or phlebotomists to draw blood. It is important to make sure that a skilled professional is present at all screening events to draw blood.
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Important Resources

Hepatitis B Foundation

- This is the Foundation's website where you access comprehensive information on hepatitis B, hepatitis D, and liver cancer. www.hepb.org.



Harm Reduction Toolkit

- A compilation of fact sheets and other educational materials focused on PWID communities.

Hepatitis B Reactivation Guide

- Reactivation is a rare event but can be deadly. The Hepatitis B Foundation has put together an informational guide for public health workers to learn more about hepatitis B reactivation and its consequences.



Hep B Training Hub

- This site provides training, education and resources on hepatitis B, hepatitis D, and liver cancer, for anyone who wants to learn more.



Additional Resources for Screening and Funding Programs

[HepConnect](#)

[NASTAD](#)

[HEPBUNITED](#)

[CDC 2103 Component 3: Special Projects for PWID](#)

[SAMHSA Grants Dashboard](#)

[National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable \(NVHR\).](#)

