

# Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer

## What is Liver Cancer?

Cancer is a disease in which normal cells change and grow uncontrollably, forming a lump called a tumor or mass. When this originates in the liver, this is called primary liver cancer, also known as hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Liver cancer is the 5th most common cancer globally. Despite the improvement in liver cancer survival in recent decades, only 1 in 5 patients survives 5 years after diagnosis.

## What is the Link Between Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer?

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and is the leading cause of liver cancer worldwide. People living with chronic hepatitis B have a higher risk of developing liver cancer. With early diagnosis of hepatitis B and being regularly monitored by a doctor, the risk for liver cancer often decreases dramatically. For many people, taking approved antiviral treatment for their hepatitis B can also decrease the risk.

## Liver Cancer by the Numbers:

### In the World:

- There are nearly 850,000 new cases of liver cancer and 800,000 deaths each year.
- The number of people diagnosed continues to increase every year, more than any other cancer.
- Most liver cancer cases occur in sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, where hepatitis B is more common.

### In the United States:

- There are 42,000 new cases and 30,000 deaths each year.
- Liver cancer is the 5th most common cause of cancer deaths in men, and 8th most common in women.
- Since 1980, new cases of liver cancer have more than tripled and death rates have more than doubled.

## If I Have Hepatitis B, Can Liver Cancer Be Prevented?

Liver cancer can often be prevented by understanding your risk factors, seeing your doctor for regular check-ups, and undergoing liver cancer surveillance (regular screening for liver cancer) every 6 months. There are effective treatments for hepatitis B, which can prevent or slow liver disease progression. Living a healthy lifestyle, avoiding alcohol consumption, smoking tobacco and harmful environmental exposures are also helpful.

## Of Those Who Have Hepatitis B, Who is at Highest Risk for Liver Cancer?

- Asian men >40 years of age
- Asian women >50 years of age
- African men >20 years of age
- People who have a family history of liver cancer
- People who have a hepatitis C, hepatitis delta or HIV coinfection
- People who have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NASH)
- People who have cirrhosis (liver scarring)
- People who drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or are overweight/obese
- People who have diabetes
- People who have an inherited metabolic disease (such as Hemochromatosis or Wilson's Disease)
- People who are exposed to environmental toxins that could damage the liver (aflatoxins, industrial chemicals, arsenic)

## If I Have Hepatitis B, How Do I Get Screened for Liver Cancer?

Talk to the doctor who manages your hepatitis B infection about liver cancer surveillance. The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) recommends those at greatest risk have a liver ultrasound, with or without an alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) blood test, every 6 months to screen for liver cancer. This can detect any masses that may be cancerous within the liver.

## Can Liver Cancer Be Treated?

If caught early, liver cancer can often be treated; and the earlier it is detected, the higher likelihood that treatment will be effective. Potential treatment options may include surgery, chemotherapy, targeted oral therapy, radiation therapy, embolization, ablation or a liver transplant. It's very important to work with a knowledgeable doctor or team of doctors to evaluate your situation and determine the best treatment option for you.

## Liver Cancer Resources:

- Liver Cancer Connect: [www.livercancerconnect.org](http://www.livercancerconnect.org)
- Liver cancer treatment center locator: [www.hepb.org/livercancercenters](http://www.hepb.org/livercancercenters)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/liver/>

*We need to increase awareness about liver cancer, its link to hepatitis B, and global health burden! If you are at risk, talk to your doctor about liver cancer surveillance and how you can stay healthy.*