

Easy B Facts

Hepatitis B Treatment

Not everyone who is infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) needs treatment. Doctors generally recommend treatment only if the virus is damaging your liver.

There are many factors your doctor will consider, such as

your ALT level (elevated ALT levels means liver cells are damaged), viral load (HBV DNA), and how sick your liver is. There are two types of drugs available to lower your viral load and help reduce liver damage.

Antivirals – are medications (in pill form) that make it hard for HBV to reproduce, but they usually work for only as long as you take them. They are able to lower the amount of HBV in your body and stop liver damage in about 70% to 90% of patients. Some antivirals lose their effectiveness over time because HBV is able to “resist” the medication and keep replicating. This is called drug resistance.

Interferon – Pegylated interferon, given as a weekly injection, boosts your immune system to fight infection. This treatment is most effective when ALTs are elevated and your viral load is not very high. It is successful about 35% of the time. Unlike antivirals, interferon’s improvements can continue even after treatment ends.

Unfortunately, these treatments cannot cure hepatitis B. Today, doctors often try one drug (either an antiviral or interferon) first, and then may try another if you continue to have a high viral load and signs of liver damage.

Remember.....

- Not everyone needs to be treated.
- Antivirals can lower your viral load while you take them. Talk with your doctor about the one with the lowest risk of viral resistance.
- Most doctors won’t treat unless your ALT is elevated, or you have been infected for many years, or you have other signs of liver damage.
- Work closely with your doctor and discuss the best treatment options that are right for you.



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Hepatitis C
Support Project

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