



Viral Hepatitis B in North Carolina, 2021



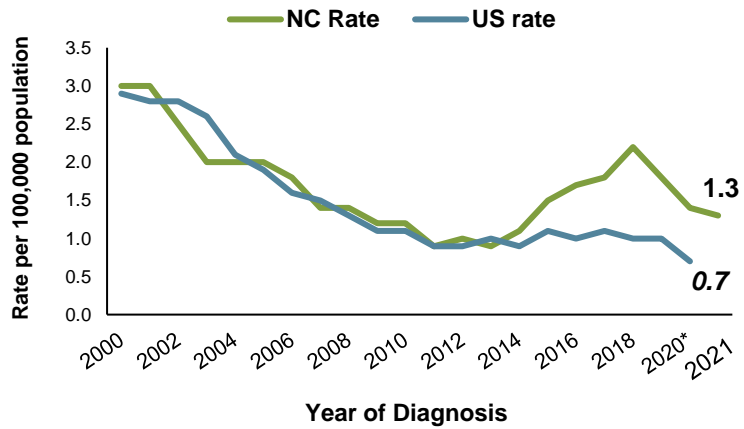
Acute hepatitis B rate in NC is nearly double the US rate

Acute Hepatitis B

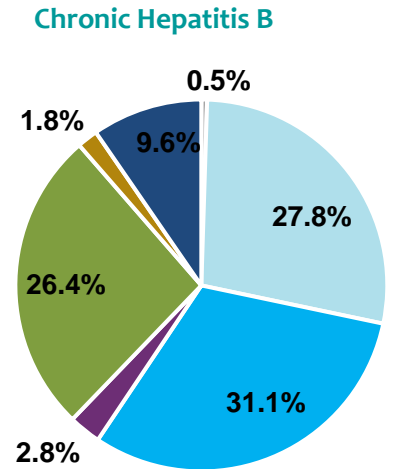
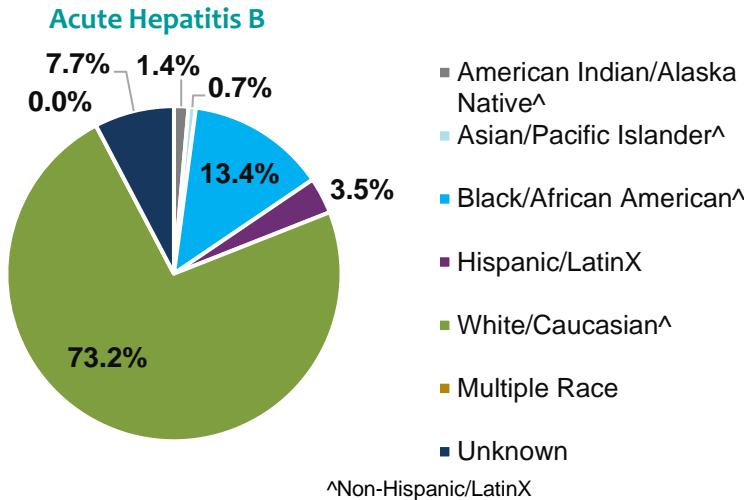
- 142 acute hepatitis B cases were reported in 2021, with a rate of 1.3 per 100,000 population.
- Acute HBV rates in North Carolina are higher than that of the national average.
- About 10% of acutely infected adults will develop chronic hepatitis B.

Chronic Hepatitis B

- 864 people were diagnosed with chronic hepatitis B in 2021.
- There were 27,312 people living in North Carolina with confirmed diagnosis of chronic hepatitis B at the end of 2021.



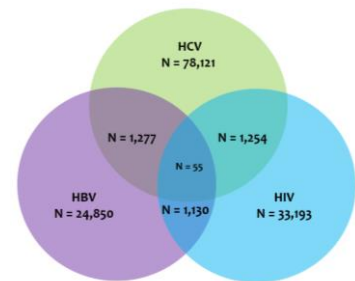
The majority of people with acute hepatitis B are White/Caucasian, while chronic hepatitis B is more evenly distributed among race/ethnicity groups



Reported Risk Factors

- Injection drug use (IDU) has been a growing risk factor for acute hepatitis B in North Carolina.
- In 2021, IDU was reported by approximately 30% of people with acute hepatitis B and 8% of people diagnosed with chronic hepatitis B. Exposure is based on self-reported data. These data likely reflect under-reporting of stigmatized exposures, such as IDU.
- Being infected with hepatitis C or HIV is also an indicator of risk for hepatitis B infection; people with these diseases should be tested and, if not infected, vaccinated for hepatitis B.

Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV Coinfection



*Note: 2020 data should be treated with caution due to reduced availability of testing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data is italicized for this reason.



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Hepatitis B Causes and Symptoms

Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). For some people (5-10% of infected persons), short term infection leads to lifelong (chronic) HBV infection, which can result in severe liver disease, liver damage, liver cancer and even death.

HBV symptoms include fatigue, poor appetite, abdominal pain, fever, nausea, vomiting, occasional joint pain, hives or rash. Urine may become darker in color, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and/or the whites of the eyes) may appear.

Symptoms, although rare in occurrence, may last for several weeks to about six months after exposure.

People with hepatitis B should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

How is it transmitted?

Hepatitis B is spread when bodily fluids infected with the hepatitis B virus enter the body of a person who is not infected. Bodily fluids can include:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal fluids



Who is at risk?

- People who use or have used drugs
- People living with or sexually active with an infected person
- Men who have sex with men
- People who have hepatitis C and/or HIV
- Infants born to mothers who have hepatitis B

Hepatitis B Prevention

- **VACCINATE!** Hepatitis B vaccine and hepatitis A/B combination vaccine are available at your local health department. Twinrix hepatitis A/B vaccine is available at no cost for patients who have not received a documented full HBV series of vaccine. For more information, visit Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resource websites: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/vaccchildren.htm> and <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/vaccadults.htm>.
- Get Tested! Risk-based testing for hepatitis B is available through all local health departments at no cost.
- Safer sex practices such as using condoms and ensuring both partners are tested before having sex prevent hepatitis B.
- Never share drug use equipment; instead, utilize syringe access programs and clean surfaces with 10% bleach solution.
 - The North Carolina Viral Hepatitis Program, within the Communicable Disease Branch, has created a regional drug user health resource guide. It contains region-specific information on low cost/free clinics, housing, food pantry and community means, hepatitis treatment providers, and syringe access programs. The guide is available online: https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/hepatitis/DrugUserHealthResourceGuide_08102021.pdf.
 - The North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition (<http://www.nchrc.org/>) provides harm reduction materials to syringe access programs and community-based organizations to prevent transmission of hepatitis B.
 - The Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, within the Division of Public Health, oversees the North Carolina Safer Syringe Initiative. For more information, please visit: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/north-carolina-safer-syringe-initiative>.



Data Sources: North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS) (data as of October 1, 2022), enhanced HIV/AIDS Reporting System (eHARS) (data as of October 1, 2022), Surveillance for Viral Hepatitis, United States, 2000-2020 CDC reports (<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/index.htm>).