

# HEPATITIS B



## NEWSLETTER

Compiled by: Lancet Laboratories SA

### WHAT IS HEPATITIS B ?

Hepatitis B is inflammation of the liver due to infection with the hepatitis B virus.

The severity of the disease can range from a mild illness lasting only a few weeks (called acute infection), to a lifelong, serious (and potentially deadly) illness (called chronic infection).

Hepatitis B virus is NOT spread by food, water, sharing eating utensils, coughing, sneezing, hugging, kissing, holding hands or breastfeeding.

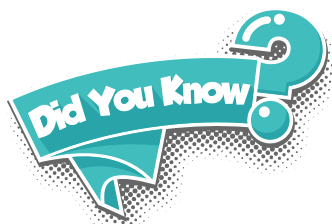
**Chronic infection causes more than 650 000 deaths each year.**

**Chronic hepatitis B is a global problem. More than 250 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis B virus.**

**More than 91 million Africans live with Hepatitis B or C, which are the deadliest strains of the virus.**

### HOW LIKELY IS IT ACUTE HEPATITIS B TO BECOME CHRONIC?

The likelihood depends on the age at which a person becomes infected. The younger a person is when they are infected with hepatitis B virus, the greater the chance that the infection will become chronic. **Approximately 90% of infants who are infected around the time of birth will develop chronic infection.** The risk decreases as you get older, dropping to around 5% if you are infected as an adult.



### HOW IS HEPATITIS B SPREAD ?

Hepatitis B virus is spread when blood, semen or other body fluids infected with the virus, enters the body of an uninfected person.

#### POTENTIALLY WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR:

- Having unprotected sex with an infected partner
- During birth (when the virus spreads)
- Exposure to blood through needlesticks or other injuries caused by sharp instruments
- Sharing drug-injection equipment such as needles and syringes (including sharing infected needles for acupuncture, piercings and tattooing)
- Sharing items such as toothbrushes or razors
- Through direct contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person

