



65%

of those infected with HBV in the U.S. do not know they are infected.⁶

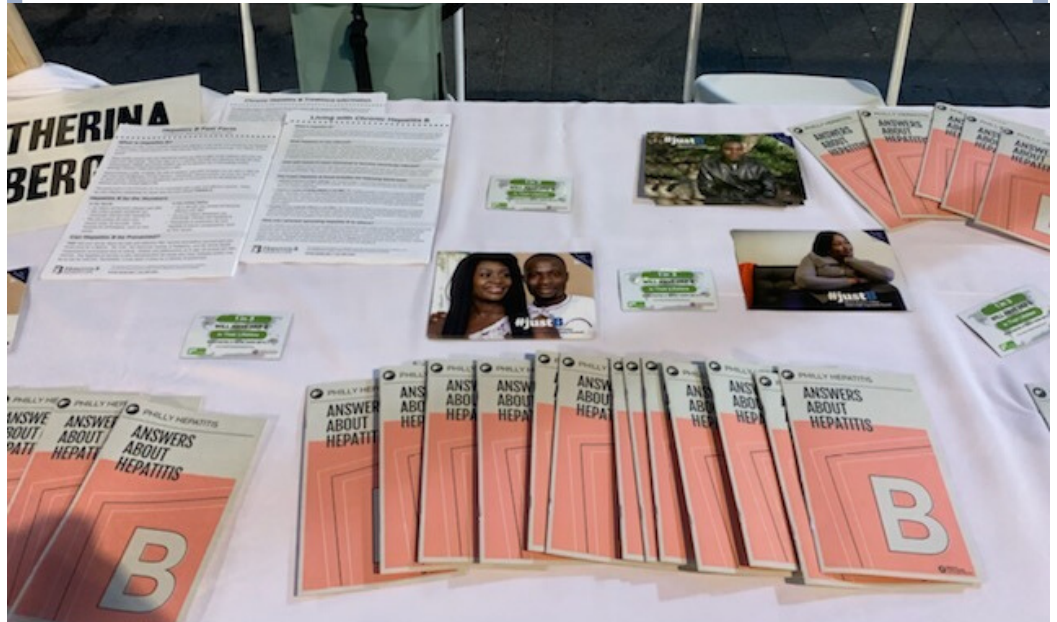
90%

develop chronic HBV when infected at birth.⁴

75%

of adults in the U.S. are not fully vaccinated for HBV.⁷

HEPATITIS B



BACKGROUND

Hepatitis B (HBV) is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus that enters the body by direct blood contact.¹ Blood, semen, and vaginal fluids of an infected person enters the body of a person without HBV to spread the virus.¹ Worldwide, HBV predominantly spreads from an infected mother to their child during birth.² HBV can also spread by sharing used drug-injection tools, and unprotected sex with an infected person.³ People who become infected as an adult have a 1% to 5% chance of developing a long-term or chronic HBV infection.⁴ However, those who are infected at birth have a 90% chance of developing chronic HBV.⁴ Chronic HBV often leads to scarring of the liver (otherwise known as cirrhosis), liver failure, or primary liver cancer.^{5 6} Additionally, one in four people with HBV will die early from either HBV-related liver failure or liver cancer.⁷ Most people who become infected with HBV have no immediate symptoms.⁹ Therefore, HBV is known as a silent disease, because infected individuals can live for

years before they feel ill or have pain due to HBV.⁹ That is why early HBV testing is imperative. To prevent HBV, there are safe and effective HBV vaccines available for all ages (from infants to adults).⁸ For adults, there is a 2-dose HBV vaccine with a better rate of protection than the 3-dose HBV vaccine.⁸ ¹⁵ However, 75% of adults in the U.S. are not fully vaccinated for HBV.⁷ The U.S. also has standard protocols to screen pregnant women for HBV and treat pregnant women with HBV to protect their infants.¹ However, there is no cure for HBV.³

In Philadelphia, it is estimated that over 25,132 people live with chronic HBV, and there are about 3,000 new cases annually.⁶ ¹⁰ On top of that, up to 65% of people living with HBV in the U.S. are unaware of their condition.⁶ Therefore, there are more unknown cases of HBV in Philadelphia.⁶ More than 50% of those infected with HBV in Philadelphia are immigrants and children of immigrants from countries where HBV is endemic.³ These individuals predominantly come from Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Africa.¹⁰ Philadelphia has more than 212,000 Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and more than 55,000 African immigrants, yet less than 10% of AAPIs and African immigrants living in Philadelphia have been tested or vaccinated for HBV.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) announced a health advisory in December of 2019 declaring a 175% increase in diagnosed acute HBV cases (new HBV infections).¹¹ The majority of these cases were among people who use drugs and people living homeless.¹¹

HEP B UNITED PHILADELPHIA

Hep B United Philadelphia (HBUP) is a city-wide coalition founded by the Hepatitis B Foundation (HBF) in 2008.¹² HBUP aims to eliminate HBV in Philadelphia by raising awareness, educating high-risk populations, and preventing the spread of HBV.¹² A main goal of HBUP is to connect people living with HBV to culturally competent healthcare that meets the patient's needs.¹² Vulnerable



25,132

people in Philadelphia were known to have chronic HBV in September, 2019.⁶



< 10%

of African immigrants and Asian American Pacific Islanders in Philadelphia have been tested for HBV.¹⁰



175%

increase in diagnosed acute HBV cases in December, 2019. Most cases were among people who inject drugs or live homeless.¹¹

communities need doctors or specialists that speak their preferred language and understand cultural complexities that may impede the treatment process.¹² Since 2008, HBUP:

- Reached over 10,000 Philadelphians
- Provided in-person education for over 7,500 people
- Offered free hepatitis B screening to over 4,000 people
- Administered over 500 free doses of the HBV vaccine
- Found medical homes for 85% of infected individuals.¹²

HBUP is part of the national coalition, Hep B United, which has city-wide coalitions in 26 cities and 15 states across the U.S.¹³ HBUP has over 70 community partners, including the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), university health systems, social service providers, health care professionals, nonprofits, community organizations, and providers of human services to vulnerable populations in Philadelphia.¹⁴ HBUP also has the support of the Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Asian American Affairs and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Asian American Affairs.¹² HBUP has become one of the largest city-wide HBV coalitions in the U.S.¹² Our community programs for culturally competent HBV testing, vaccination, and linkage to care helps identify best practices for other cities in the U.S.¹²



Community screening event in 2019

HBUP's Impact Since 2008



10,000
REACHED



7,500
EDUCATED IN
PERSON



4,000
TESTED FOR HBV
FOR FREE



> 500
FREE HBV
VACCINES GIVEN



85%
OF PEOPLE WHO
TESTED POSITIVE
FOR HBV WERE
LINKED TO
CULTURALLY
COMPETENT CARE¹²



STATE FUNDING

Since the Fall of 2019, HBUP has participated in a statewide coalition, Hep Free PA, organized by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.²² The coalition consists of public health professionals, healthcare staff, patients, and community representatives disproportionately affected by viral hepatitis.²² The U.S. has safe and effective vaccines for hepatitis A and B and robust treatment options for hepatitis B and C.²² However, there is a lack of systematic support from the state and local governments to access existing vaccines and treatment therapies.²² Pennsylvania's legislators can encourage the state to eliminate viral hepatitis by advocating for Hep Free PA's budget proposal.²² We have proposed a 3-year budget asking for five million dollars a year to:

- Promote and expand prevention services,
- Expand testing, linkage to care, and patient navigation,
- Improve awareness of viral hepatitis,
- Expand correctional health surveillance, prevention, linkage to care, and treatment,
- Improve surveillance of viral hepatitis in the state. Comprehensive surveillance will improve the allocation of services.²²

BUDGET PROPOSAL OVER 3 YEARS:

HEP FREE PA

A coalition achieving viral hepatitis elimination in PA

PREVENTION SERVICES

- Promote for youth and pregnant women (\$1.5 million)

TESTING, LINKAGE TO CARE, & PATIENT NAVIGATION

- Improve for: community-based organizations (\$3 million)
- Primary care and substance use treatment programs (\$3 million)
- Provider training (\$1 million)

AWARENESS

- Develop a campaign & educate the public (\$750,000)

CORRECTIONAL HEALTH

- Extend viral hepatitis care to correctional facilities (\$3.5 million)

SURVEILLANCE

- Expand to the state (\$2.25 million)

LOOKING AHEAD

Vaccinations

Currently, many pharmacies in Philadelphia fail to stock a sufficient supply of HBV vaccines.¹⁶ In September of 2019, PDPH found that 149 out of 391 pharmacies in Philadelphia had the HBV vaccine. PDPH also discovered that pharmacies close to African and Asian immigrant neighborhoods did not carry the HBV vaccine. Poor access to the HBV vaccine is alarming, especially with the recent 175% increase in acute HBV cases.¹¹

HBUP continues to work alongside community partners to improve the adult HBV vaccination rate. We ask that the city of Philadelphia help us raise awareness to improve systematic access to the 2-dose HBV vaccine. The 2-dose HBV vaccine is more effective for people without health insurance, people with low access to health care, and people with serious underlying health issues.¹⁵ The 2-dose vaccine better protects adults from HBV compared to the 3-dose vaccine, because the 2-dose vaccine has a better seroprotection and compliance rate.¹⁵ For instance, people can receive full coverage in two visits instead of three visits.¹⁵ Additionally, we advocate for a test and vaccinate model for better HBV prevention and treatment in fewer health care visits.

Syringe Service Programs

HBUP has partnered with local organizations advocating for syringe service programs or sterile syringe programs (SSP). We support our partners in this effort, PA Harm Reduction Coalition and Prevention Point Philadelphia, to improve SSP access. SSPs improve a community's access to health care, treatment for substance abuse, and social services.¹⁷ Those who visit SSPs are five times more likely to start treatment for substance abuse.¹⁷ SSPs are preventive services that reduce overdose deaths and infectious diseases such as HBV.¹⁷ On March 4, 2020, Senator Patrick Browne (R) and Senator Anthony Williams (D) cosponsored

PRIORITIZED
LEGISLATION

IMPROVE ADULT VACCINATION ACCESS

- More than half of all pharmacies in Philadelphia do not carry the HBV vaccine



STATEWIDE SYRINGE SERVICE PROGRAMS

- A memorandum to legalize syringe service programs in the entire state of Pennsylvania was published in March, 2020



SENATE BILL 786 CERTIFYING TATTOO ARTISTS

- Senate bill 786 (sb 786) requires tattoo artists, body piercers, and corrective cosmetologists to undergo an annual blood-borne pathogens certification program
- SB 786 was referred to a committee on July 8, 2019






a memorandum declaring the need for SSPs in Pennsylvania.¹⁷ While Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have legalized SSPs, the entire state of Pennsylvania has not.¹⁷ Furthermore, Pennsylvania's neighboring states have all legalized SSPs.¹⁷ HBUP promotes Senator Brown and Senator Williams' memorandum to legalize SSPs throughout Pennsylvania.

Senate Bill 786 (SB 786)

Senator Andrew Dinniman (D) introduced a memorandum in April, 2019 that addressed tattoo businesses in Pennsylvania.¹⁸ Tattoo artists come in contact with blood regularly.¹⁸ Thus, Senator Dinniman wrote SB 786 to provide state-wide regulation on the training of tattoo artists and safety standards of tattoo parlors.¹⁸ The goal of SB 786 is to decrease the rate of HBV, hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, and other blood-borne pathogens by requiring tattoo artists to undergo an annual blood-borne pathogens certification program.¹⁸ SB 786 includes the protection of body piercers and corrective cosmetologists.¹⁹ The bill was referred to the Health & Human Services Committee on July 8, 2019 with a co-sponsorship from Senator Christine Tartaglione (D).¹⁹ It has not been approved as of May, 2020.¹⁹ SB 786 can protect tattoo artists, body piercers, corrective cosmetologists, and their clients from HBV.¹⁹ HBUP urges legislators to support SB 786 to educate and certify these professions on blood-borne pathogens.

FOR UPDATES

While legislators address the widespread effects of COVID-19, the reviewed legislation and services related to HBV are timely. Stay updated with our work by following us on social media:

-  Instagram: @hepbunited_phila
-  Facebook Page: @Hep B United Philadelphia
-  Twitter: @HepBUnitedPhila

We regularly post about our work that aims to uplift Philadelphia and decrease the number of HBV infections.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION

2015-2018

PHILADELPHIA

Declared May 2015-2018 as Hepatitis Awareness Month in Philadelphia to recognize HBUP and Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia (HEPCAP).²⁰

2019

PENNSYLVANIA

House Bill 256 (HB 256) was referred to the Judiciary in December, 2019. HB 256 charges incarcerated people who knowingly infect other people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or HBV.²¹

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Follow our social media platforms listed on the left.
- Visit our website to get involved: <https://www.hepb.org/research-and-programs/hep-b-united-philadelphia/get-involved/>

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