



Hepatitis B Clinical Trials What You Need To Know

There are several promising new drugs that are being tested for hepatitis B treatment in the U.S. and around the world. In the U.S., before any drug is approved for general use by the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**, it must go through 3 phases of testing that involve studies called “**clinical trials**”. People volunteer to participate in these trials and all potential study participants are carefully screened. Participants must meet strict criteria before being accepted into a study, and must sign informed consent forms.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): A federal organization charged with protecting the public’s health. It establishes safety and effectiveness guidelines for healthcare products such as the drugs that are used to treat hepatitis B.



What is a clinical trial?

Clinical trials are carefully controlled studies that are used to determine whether new drugs, treatments or medical products are safe and effective. They can be funded through pharmaceutical companies, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), or other funding sources. Clinical trials can be conducted at universities, doctor’s offices and hospital clinics. All drugs in the U.S. undergo three phases of clinical trials before being approved for general use. Once a drug is approved and used by the general public, a phase 4 study examines possible long-term effects.

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Drugs are tested in a few volunteers (20-100) to evaluate safety, determine safe dosage levels, and identify side effects.	Drugs have passed phase I, & are tested in more people (100-500) to further evaluate safety and effectiveness.	Drugs are tested in a large number of people (1000-5000) to confirm long-term effectiveness, monitor side effects & compare with commonly used treatments.	Performed after a drug has been marketed, to collect information about its effects in various populations, including possible long-term side effects.

Why would someone choose to participate in a clinical trial?

There are several advantages to participating in clinical trials. Expensive blood work, treatment medications, and clinical monitoring may be provided free of charge. In some cases, there may be monetary compensation to patients who participate. Clinical trials provide patients the opportunity to potentially benefit from the latest advances in medical science.

How are volunteers who participate in clinical trials protected?

The government has strict guidelines to protect people who choose to participate in clinical trials. Each clinical trial is approved and monitored by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the organization conducting the clinical trial. The IRB includes physicians, ethicists, community health advocates and others to ensure that the risks are as low as possible and are worthy of the potential benefits.



What is informed consent? Anyone participating in a clinical trial is required to read and sign an informed consent form. This form provides detailed information about how the study will be conducted, what kind of medical care the patient can expect during and after the study, and the possible risks and benefits. A patient may choose to leave a study at any time.

What should you know before you join a clinical trial? Before you join a trial, you should know as much as possible about the study. It is important to fully understand the details of a clinical trial, the potential risks and benefits, and what will be expected of you during the study. You should be comfortable asking questions and having the medical staff answer them in a way that you can understand.

Tips for learning about clinical trials:

- Ask your primary care provider or specialist what clinical trials are available for you.
- Search reliable websites for information about existing clinical trials.
- Enlist your doctor to help you sift through all the information and review the pros and cons.
- Take a friend or family member with you when you meet the medical staff to discuss the study.



Did You Know?



The Hepatitis B Foundation maintains a list of HBV clinical trials on its website at www.hepb.org/clinicaltrials. For more information about clinical trials in general, visit the National Institutes of Health (NIH) clinical trials site at www.clinicaltrials.gov or visit Center Watch at www.centerwatch.com.



12 Questions to ask your doctor about clinical trials:

1. What clinical trials are available for HBV and which ones might be right for me?
2. How long will the trial last, where is it being conducted and how often will I need to go there?
3. Why do researchers think the new drug will work better than approved treatments?
4. Who is most likely to benefit from this drug and what criteria may be associated with success?
5. How many people have tested the drug and what has happened to them?
6. What will be expected of me throughout the trial (what tests or medical procedures will I need)?
7. What are the risks involved?
8. What are the possible long and short-term benefits and side effects (is the drug being tested better – or riskier – for you than no or existing treatment?)
9. Do I have to pay for any part of the trial or will my insurance pay for it?
10. What happens to my HBV when I stop taking the drug?
11. What is the medical follow-up care after the trial ends?
12. If this drug doesn't work for me, am I eligible to try another one?

How can I learn more about specific clinical trials for hepatitis B? First, talk to your doctor. If he or she is unfamiliar with clinical trials for HBV, then find a good liver specialist (or “hepatologist”) at the largest teaching hospital in your area. Visit the Hepatitis B Foundation website at www.hepb.org/specialistdirectory for a national directory of liver specialists, HBV clinical trials sites, and an updated Drug Watch. Please call us at 215/489-4900 or email us at info@hepb.org for personalized information and referrals.

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