

Chronic hepatitis B

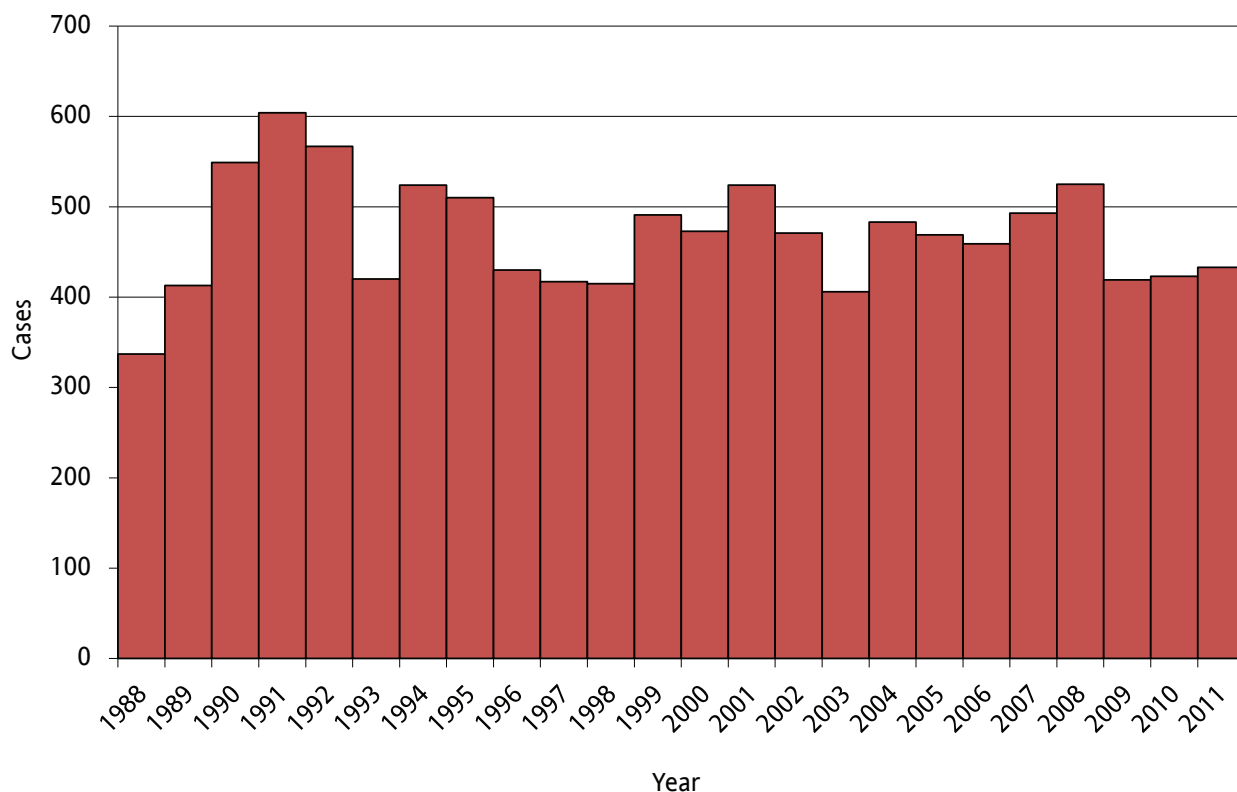
Persons with chronic hepatitis B are known as “chronic carriers” — a state of infection defined by the persistence of hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) in the blood for more than six months. The likelihood of becoming a chronic carrier is affected by the age at infection. Fewer than 6% of acutely infected adults in the United States become carriers, compared to 25% (with HBeAg-negative moms) to 90% (with HBeAg-positive moms) of children infected in early childhood or during birth. Perinatal infection can be prevented by prompt administration of hepatitis B immune globulin and initiation of the three-dose hepatitis B vaccination series. This perinatal intervention is widely practiced in the United States — all states have federal funding for perinatal hepatitis B prevention programs — but not in other parts of the world, particularly Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where the prevalence of chronic hepatitis B is higher to begin with. Forty-six percent of 2011 reports were from foreign-born individuals. Chronic carriers are at greater risk of developing life-threatening diseases (e.g., chronic active hepatitis, cirrhosis or liver cancer) decades later. Carriers will sustain transmission of hepatitis B in the United States until vaccine-induced immunity is nearly universal.

Recommendations and strategies to prevent new cases include the following: routinely vaccinating all infants at birth; screening all pregnant women for hepatitis B; administering hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) in addition to hepatitis B vaccine to infants born to HBsAg-positive mothers; and ensuring that all infants complete the hepatitis B vaccine series.

In 2011, there were 451 newly reported carriers, 41% of whom were women.

Women, however, are diagnosed earlier than men, perhaps due to prenatal screening. In 2011, two children <5 years old were reported as chronic carriers. One child was born in China and one in Cambodia; both countries have a high prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infections. Chronic carriers are not reportable in many states, so a table comparing Oregon to the rest of the United States is not given.

Chronic hepatitis B by year: Oregon, 1988–2011



Incidence of chronic hepatitis B by county of residence: Oregon 2001-2011

