TABLE 362-4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TREATMENT OF CHRONIC HEPATITIS B[a]

HBeAg status	Clinical	HBV DNA (IU/mL)	ALT	Recommendation
HBeAg-reactive	[b]	$>2 \times 10^4$	$\leq 2 \times$ ULN[c,d]	No treatment; monitor. In patients >40, with family history of hepatocellular carcinoma, and/or ALT persistently at the high end of the twofold range, liver biopsy may help in decision to treat
	Chronic hepatitis	$>2 \times 10^4$[d]	$>2 \times$ ULN[d]	Treat[e]
	Cirrhosis compensated	$>2 \times 10^3$	< or > ULN	Treat[e] with oral agents, not PEG IFN
	Cirrhosis decompensated	$<2 \times 10^3$	>ULN	Consider treatment[f]
		Detectable	< or > ULN	Treat[e] with oral agents[g], not PEG IFN; refer for liver transplantation
		Undetectable	< or > ULN	Observe; refer for liver transplantation
HBeAg-negative	[b]	$\leq 2 \times 10^3$	≤ULN	Inactive carrier; treatment not necessary
	Chronic hepatitis	$>10^3$	1 to $>2 \times$ ULN[d]	Consider liver biopsy; treat[h] if biopsy shows moderate to severe inflammation or fibrosis
	Chronic hepatitis	$>10^4$	$>2 \times$ ULN[d]	Treat[h,i]
	Cirrhosis compensated	$>2 \times 10^3$	< or > ULN	Treat[e] with oral agents, not PEG IFN
		$<2 \times 10^3$	>ULN	Consider treatment[f]
	Cirrhosis decompensated	Detectable	< or > ULN	Treat[h] with oral agents[g], not PEG IFN; refer for liver transplantation
		Undetectable	< or > ULN	Observe; refer for liver transplantation

[a]Based on practice guidelines of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD). Except as indicated in footnotes, these guidelines are similar to those issued by the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL). [b]Liver disease tends to be mild or inactive clinically; most such patients do not undergo liver biopsy. [c]This pattern is common during early decades of life in Asian patients infected at birth. [d]According to the EASL guidelines, treat if HBV DNA is $>2 \times 10^3$ IU/mL and ALT >ULN. [e]One of the potent oral drugs with a high barrier to resistance (entecavir or tenofovir) or PEG IFN can be used as first-line therapy (see text). These oral agents, but not PEG IFN, should be used for interferon-refractory/intolerant and immunocompromised patients. PEG IFN is administered weekly by subcutaneous injection for a year; the oral agents are administered daily for at least a year and continued indefinitely or until at least 6 months after HBeAg seroconversion. [f]According to EASL guidelines, patients with compensated cirrhosis and detectable HBV DNA at any level, even with normal ALT, are candidates for therapy. Most authorities would treat indefinitely, even in HBeAg-positive disease after HBeAg seroconversion. [g]Because the emergence of resistance can lead to loss of antiviral benefit and further deterioration in decompensated cirrhosis, a low-resistance regimen is recommended—entecavir or tenofovir monotherapy or combination therapy with the more resistance-prone lamivudine (or telbivudine) plus adefovir. Therapy should be instituted urgently. [h]Because HBeAg seroconversion is not an option, the goal of therapy is to suppress HBV DNA and maintain a normal ALT. PEG IFN is administered by subcutaneous injection weekly for a year; caution is warranted in relying on a 6-month posttreatment interval to define a sustained response, because the majority of such responses are lost thereafter. Oral agents, entecavir or tenofovir, are administered daily, usually indefinitely or until, as very rarely occurs, virologic and biochemical responses are accompanied by HBsAg seroconversion. [i]For older patients and those with advanced fibrosis, consider lowering the HBV DNA threshold to $>2 \times 10^3$ IU/mL.

Abbreviations: AASLD, American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases; ALT, alanine aminotransferase; EASL, European Association for the Study of the Liver; HBeAg, hepatitis B e antigen; HBsAg, hepatitis B surface antigen; HBV, hepatitis B virus; PEG IFN, pegylated interferon; ULN, upper limit of normal.

yields HBeAg responses (and even HBsAg responses) comparable in frequency to those achieved after 1 year of PEG IFN (and without the associated side effects) **(Table 362-5)**. Although adefovir and tenofovir are safe, creatinine monitoring is recommended. Substantial experience with lamivudine during pregnancy (see above) has identified no teratogenicity. Although interferons do not appear to cause congenital anomalies, interferons have antiproliferative properties and should be avoided during pregnancy. Adefovir during pregnancy has not been associated with birth defects; however, there may be an increased risk of spontaneous abortion. Data on the safety of entecavir during pregnancy have not been published. Sufficient data in animals and limited data in humans suggest that telbivudine and tenofovir can be used safely during pregnancy. In general, except perhaps for lamivudine, and until additional data become available, the other antivirals for hepatitis B should be avoided or used with extreme caution during pregnancy.

As noted above, some physicians prefer to begin with PEG IFN, while other physicians and patients prefer oral agents as first-line therapy. For patients with decompensated cirrhosis, the emergence of resistance can result in further deterioration and loss of antiviral effectiveness. Therefore, in this patient subset, the threshold for relying on therapy with a very favorable resistance profile (e.g., entecavir or tenofovir) or on combination therapy is low. PEG IFN should not be used in patients with compensated or decompensated cirrhosis.

For patients with end-stage chronic hepatitis B who undergo liver transplantation, reinfection of the new liver is almost universal in the absence of antiviral therapy. The majority of patients become high-level viremic carriers with minimal liver injury. Before the availability of antiviral therapy, an unpredictable proportion experienced severe hepatitis B–related liver injury, sometimes a fulminant-like hepatitis and sometimes a rapid recapitulation of the original severe chronic hepatitis B **(Chap. 360)**. Currently, however, prevention of recurrent hepatitis B after liver transplantation has been achieved definitively by *combining* hepatitis B immune globulin with one of the oral nucleoside or nucleotide analogues **(Chap. 368)**; preliminary data suggest that the newer, more potent, and less resistance-prone oral agents may be used instead of hepatitis B immune globulin for posttransplantation therapy.

Patients with HBV-HIV co-infection can have progressive HBV-associated liver disease and, occasionally, a severe exacerbation of hepatitis B resulting from immunologic reconstitution following ART. Lamivudine should never be used as monotherapy in patients with HBV-HIV infection because HIV resistance emerges rapidly to both viruses. Adefovir has been used successfully to treat chronic hepatitis B in HBV-HIV co-infected patients but is no longer considered a first-line agent for HBV. Entecavir has low-level activity against HIV and can result in selection of HIV resistance; therefore, it should be avoided in HBV-HIV co-infection. Tenofovir and the combination of tenofovir and emtricitabine in one pill are approved therapies for HIV and represent excellent choices for treating HBV infection in HBV-HIV co-infected patients. Generally, even for HBV-HIV co-infected patients who do not yet meet treatment criteria for HIV infection, treating for both HBV and HIV is recommended.

Patients with chronic hepatitis B who undergo cytotoxic chemotherapy for treatment of malignancies as well as patients treated with immunosuppressive, anticytokine, or antitumor necrosis factor therapies experience enhanced HBV replication and viral expression on hepatocyte membranes during chemotherapy coupled with suppression of cellular immunity. When chemotherapy is withdrawn, such patients are at risk for reactivation of hepatitis B, often severe and occasionally fatal. Such rebound reactivation represents restoration of cytolytic T cell function against a target organ enriched in HBV expression. Preemptive treatment with lamivudine prior to the initiation of chemotherapy has been shown to reduce the risk of such reactivation. The newer, more potent oral antiviral agents are