



Viral Hepatitis Fact Sheet

The three most common types of hepatitis virus are types A, B, and C. These are three different viruses, but all of them attack the liver.

Q: How is hepatitis spread?

A: **Hepatitis A** is usually spread by contaminated food or water, and because of poor hand-washing. Hepatitis A can also be spread during sex, especially if there is mouth-to-anus contact. Hepatitis A is very easy to catch.

Hepatitis B can be spread during vaginal, anal, and possibly oral sex.

A woman can pass Hepatitis B to her baby before or during birth.

Sharing items that might have blood on them, such as razors, toothbrushes, and needles (for shooting up or tattooing) can spread Hepatitis B. Sharing inhalers for drug use (items placed inside the nose) may also spread Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C is transmitted by blood. Most infections occur through injection drug use. People who share needles (to inject drugs or give tattoos) can be infected. Sharing inhalers for drug use (items placed inside the nose) may also spread Hepatitis C.

It is uncommon, but not impossible, for Hepatitis C to be passed during sex.

A woman can pass Hepatitis C to her baby before or during birth.

Before 1992, people were also infected by blood transfusions. Now the blood supply is tested for Hepatitis C, so getting it from a blood transfusion is very rare.

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Q: What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis?

A:

- Some people may not notice any symptoms. There are blood tests to detect hepatitis. Ask your doctor.
- Symptoms may include: fatigue, abdominal pain, fevers, loss of appetite, yellowing of the skin or eyes, dark urine, and light-colored stool
- Symptoms may be brief or may last for several weeks.

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Q: Is hepatitis serious?

A: **Hepatitis can be serious, especially if long-term infection develops. This is called chronic hepatitis.**

Hepatitis A is not normally a long-term infection. Most people recover from symptoms without any long-term problems. Once a person has had Hepatitis A, they can't catch it again.

Hepatitis B can be a long-term infection. About one in ten infected adults have the infection for life.

They may not know they are infected with Hepatitis B, but they can pass it to their sex partners. These people may also develop severe liver damage, liver cancer, or liver failure later in life. These conditions can cause death.

Hepatitis C usually does develop into a life-long infection (about seven in ten infected adults).

Later in life, Hepatitis C can cause severe liver damage, liver cancer, and liver failure; however, there are people who live with Hepatitis C and have no problems.

Q: How is hepatitis treated?

- A:**
- If you think you have hepatitis, you should see a doctor. Your doctor will know if you need treatment.
 - People with hepatitis should avoid all alcohol and drug use in order to prevent further liver damage.
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Q: How can I avoid getting hepatitis?

A: Hepatitis A

- Avoid mouth-to-anus and mouth-to-genital contact with a person who has active Hepatitis A.
- Avoid contact with contaminated food or water.
- A vaccine that protects against Hepatitis A is available.

Hepatitis B

- A different vaccine that protects against Hepatitis B is available.
- Children are now routinely vaccinated for Hepatitis B. Adolescents and others at particularly high risk (men who have sex with men, and people who shoot drugs) should also get the vaccine.
- Condom use may reduce the risk of Hepatitis B.
- Do not inject drugs or share needles, including tattoo needles.
- If you do inject drugs, do not re-use needles. Do not share water, cookers, or filters.
- Do not share razors, toothbrushes, or other items that may have blood on them.

Hepatitis C

- Currently there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.
 - Do not inject drugs or share needles, including tattoo needles.
 - If you do inject drugs, do not re-use needles. Do not share water, cookers, or filters.
 - Condoms may reduce the risk of Hepatitis C.
 - Do not share razors, toothbrushes, or other items that may have blood on them.
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HIV IS ALSO A STD!

When you get infected with Hepatitis B or C, you could also be getting HIV.
Birth control pills or a birth control shot cannot protect you against hepatitis or other STDs.

 **USING LATEX CONDOMS CORRECTLY EVERY TIME YOU HAVE SEX CAN PREVENT HIV AND MAY HELP PREVENT HEPATITIS.**

Q: Where can I get more information about STDs and referrals for STD testing?

- A:**
- **Phone:** Talk to a trained operator who can answer your questions and provide information about STD testing. **In English and Español 24 hours/day, 7 days/week:** Toll-free: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636); TTY for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 1-888-232-6348
 - **Internet:** http://www.hepfi.org/education/estore_info.html <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>
http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/fact_sheets.htm

Talk to your own health care provider, or call your county health department by looking for the telephone number in the phone book (white pages) under county government. Ask to speak to someone in the STD clinic or STD program for more information about sexually-transmitted hepatitis.