

Hepatitis: Silent but Treatable

DID YOU KNOW...

Individuals of African descent have the highest rate of hepatitis and are 3 times more likely to die from hepatitis B than non-Hispanic whites.

Identifying and treating hepatitis **early is easy, but if it is not treated early, hepatitis can lead to death.**



WHAT IS HEPATITIS?

- Hepatitis is a disease of the liver that can lead to illness and death.
- Your liver is important for staying healthy because it is responsible for storing nutrition, removing waste products, and filtering your blood from alcohol and drugs.
- In the United States, hepatitis is usually caused by infection with one of three viruses commonly referred to as Hep A, Hep B, and Hep C. Hep E is uncommon in the U.S.
- Infection with Hep B or Hep C can lead to cancer.

IMPORTANT FACTS

- A blood test will show if you have hepatitis.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent liver damage.
- Excessive alcohol use can lead to fatty liver disease and alcohol hepatitis.
- Hepatitis is usually caused by a virus, but not the same virus that causes other ailments flu or colds.
- Hepatitis viruses are not HIV or AIDS, but are spread in the same ways.

RISK FACTORS FOR HEPATITIS

HEP A, also known as Hepatitis A virus (HAV), can be passed on if you eat food or drink water that has the virus in it. Usually this is from dirty water or raw fish. People generally get well in less than six weeks with no liver damage.

HEP B, also known as the Hepatitis B virus (HBV), is spread through blood and body fluids, including saliva. Hep B can also be spread by unprotected sexual contact and it can be passed to a baby at birth from the mother.

HEP C, also known as the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), is also spread through direct contact with infected blood and bodily fluids. You can get Hep C by unprotected sex, sharing drug needles, and getting body piercings or tattoos that use dirty ink or needles. You can even get Hep C and Hep B from someone who has it if you share personal items such as toothbrushes, razors, or nail clippers.





WHAT DOES NOT CAUSE HEPATITIS?

- You cannot get Hep C or Hep B by touching sweat, urine, or tears.
- You cannot get Hep C or Hep B from sneezes or coughs.
- You cannot get Hep B or Hep C through blood transfusions because of safety improvements in blood donations since 1992.
- People born from 1945 to 1965 are called baby boomers. They are much more likely to have Hep C than people born before or after those years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all baby boomers be tested.

WHY SHOULD I GET TESTED FOR HEPATITIS?

- About 2 million people in the United States have Hep B.
- People of African descent are especially susceptible to Hep B.
- Most people do not feel sick until the virus causes liver damage. That can take 10 or more years.
- Most people that have hepatitis don't know they have it and can accidentally spread it to others
- More people die from hepatitis in the U.S. than from HIV or AIDS.

WHERE CAN I GET TESTED?

- You can get tested at your doctor's office.
- Most public health offices will test for hepatitis.
- See your doctor right away if you think you have been in contact with someone who has hepatitis.
- In many instances, you can get tested for free.

PREVENTION, VACCINATION & TREATMENT

- Avoid risky behaviors such as excessive alcohol use, intravenous drug use, getting tattoos from unlicensed places and sharing personal items such as toothbrushes, needles, razors or nail clippers with someone who has hepatitis.
- Hep A can be prevented through vaccinations.
- Hep B can be prevented through vaccinations. Babies are often vaccinated against Hep B before they even leave the hospital.
- There is no vaccination for Hep C but it can be treated.
- If you test positive for hepatitis and have not been treated in the past, you should ask for treatment now—today's treatment options are easier than in the past.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

To find out more, visit a health professional. Information is available online:

www.nastad.org/domestic/viral-hepatitis

www.caringambassadors.org



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This fact sheet was created with funds from the Office of Minority Health Resource Center.