

Hepatitis

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HINTS FOR HEALTH

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“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected.

Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications, and certain medical conditions can cause hepatitis. However, hepatitis is most often caused by a virus. The most common types of viral hepatitis are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C.

- Abdominal pain or discomfort, especially in the area of your liver on your right side beneath your lower ribs
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Loss of appetite
- Low-grade fever
- Dark urine
- Joint pain
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)

If you have hepatitis A, you may have a mild illness that lasts a few weeks or a severe illness that lasts several months. Not everyone with hepatitis A develops signs or symptoms.

Hepatitis A virus can be transmitted several ways, such as:

- Eating food handled by someone with the virus who doesn't thoroughly wash his or her hands after using the toilet
- Drinking contaminated water
- Eating raw shellfish from water polluted with sewage
- Being in close contact with a person who's infected — even if that person has no signs or symptoms
- Having sex with someone who has the virus

Hepatitis A

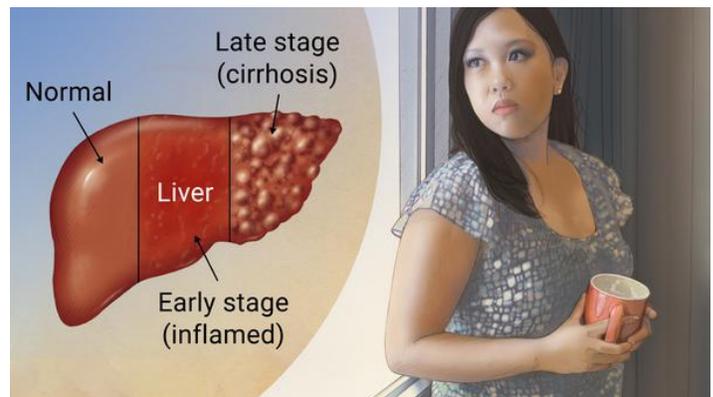


Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus is one of several types of hepatitis viruses that cause inflammation and affect your liver's ability to function. You're most likely to contract hepatitis A from contaminated food or water or from close contact with someone who's infected. Mild cases of hepatitis A don't require treatment, and most people who are infected recover completely with no permanent liver damage. Practicing good hygiene, including washing hands frequently, is one of the best ways to protect against hepatitis A. Vaccines are available for people most at risk.

Hepatitis A signs and symptoms, which typically don't appear until you've had the virus for a few weeks, may include:

- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting

Hepatitis B



Hepatitis B is a serious liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). For some people, hepatitis B infection becomes chronic, meaning it lasts more than six months. Having chronic hepatitis B increases your risk of developing liver failure, liver cancer or cirrhosis — a condition that causes permanent scarring of the liver.

Most people infected with hepatitis B as adults recover fully, even if their signs and symptoms are severe. Infants and children are more likely to develop a chronic hepatitis B infection.

A vaccine can prevent hepatitis B, but there's no cure if you have it. This vaccine is given in 3 doses; after the first dose, two more doses are given 1 month and 6 months after the first dose. This vaccine cannot give you Hepatitis B.

Signs and symptoms of hepatitis B, ranging from mild to severe, usually appear about one to four months after you've been infected.

- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Weakness and fatigue
- Yellowing of your skin and the whites of your eyes (jaundice)

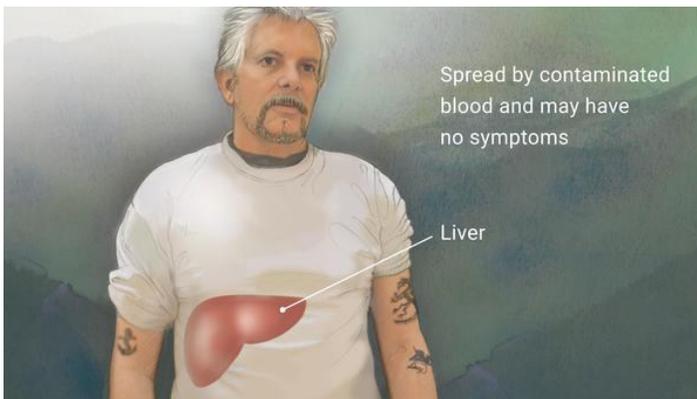
Causes

Hepatitis B infection is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). The virus is passed from person to person through blood, semen or other body fluids.

Common ways HBV is transmitted include:

- Sexual contact
- Sharing of needles
- Accidental needle sticks/contact with human blood
- Mother to child

Hepatitis C



Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a serious, blood-borne disease that has been under the radar. It's not talked about much, so even though it affects millions, many people don't know about it. It's almost been forgotten.

- About 50% of people with Hepatitis C do not know they are infected and have no symptoms
- 3 in 4 people with Hepatitis C were born from 1945-1965
- Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver transplants, liver cancer and even death
- No vaccine available

Symptoms

Chronic hepatitis C (long-term infection) is usually a "silent" infection for many years, until the virus damages the liver enough to cause the signs and symptoms of liver disease. Among these signs and symptoms are:

- Bleeding easily
- Bruising easily
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite

- Yellow discoloration of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Dark-colored urine
- Itchy skin
- Fluid buildup in your abdomen (ascites)
- Swelling in your legs
- Weight loss
- Confusion, drowsiness and slurred speech (also known as hepatic encephalopathy)
- Spider-like blood vessels on your skin (spider angiomas)

Every chronic hepatitis C infection starts with an acute phase. Acute hepatitis C usually goes undiagnosed because it rarely causes symptoms. When signs and symptoms are present, they may include jaundice, along with fatigue, nausea, fever and muscle aches. Acute symptoms appear one to three months after exposure to the virus and last two weeks to three months.

Acute hepatitis C infection doesn't always become chronic. Some people clear HCV from their bodies after the acute phase, an outcome known as spontaneous viral clearance. Acute hepatitis C also responds well to antiviral therapy.

Causes

Hepatitis C infection is caused by the hepatitis C virus. The infection spreads when blood contaminated with the virus enters the bloodstream of an uninfected person.

Chronic HCV is usually curable with oral medications taken every day for two to six months. Still, about half of people with HCV don't know they're infected, mainly because they have no symptoms, which can take decades to appear. For that reason, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a one-time screening blood test for everyone at increased risk of the infection. The largest group at risk includes everyone born between 1945 and 1965 — a population five times more likely to be infected than those born in other years.

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