

HEPATITIS: The Real Facts

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is transmitted through contact with feces via the oral-anal route—for example, through oral/anal sex or eating food that has been contaminated by feces containing the Hepatitis A virus (HAV)—as well as hand-to-mouth after contact with feces, like when changing diapers.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may resemble stomach flu; light stools, dark urine, fatigue, fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, jaundice (yellowing of the skin). Hepatitis A will not lead to chronic hepatitis and will self-resolve. Once you are vaccinated or have the infection you will never get it again. There is no cure, only treatment for symptoms.

Who's at risk?

Children often contract this virus through household contact and develop immunity with few or no symptoms. Travelers to developing countries with poor sanitation & contaminated water, persons engaging in anal/oral sex, and eating food contaminated with HAV.

How can I avoid getting Hepatitis A?

Washing hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom or coming into contact with feces. Using household bleach (10 parts water to 1 part bleach) to clean contaminated surfaces (e.g. changing tables). Have safer sex.

Hepatitis A can be prevented with a vaccine.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with body fluids such as blood, semen or vaginal secretions. The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) may also be transmitted from mother to infant during birth. It can cause liver cell damage, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), and may lead to liver cancer in the 10–15% of people infected who go on to develop chronic HBV infection.

What are the symptoms?

Dark urine, light stools, jaundice, fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting. May have no symptoms. Hepatitis B disease may be treated with Interferon, Lamivudine, or Adefovir Dipivoxil, but there is no cure. Liver transplant may be necessary over time with chronic infection.

Who's at risk?

Emergency responders, persons with multiple sex partners or who engage in anal sex, injection drug users, health care workers, and hemodialysis patients.

Hepatitis D (HDV) only infects people with HBV, is similar to HBV, and can be prevented in the same ways as HBV.

How can I avoid getting Hepatitis B?

Clean up infected blood with household bleach. Wear protective gloves. Don't share razors, toothbrushes, or needles. Have safer sex.

Hepatitis B can be prevented with a vaccine.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is transmitted through contact with blood via needles, razors, tattoo and body piercing tools, as well as from mother to infant during birth. If left untreated, the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) can cause cirrhosis or liver cancer. Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplants in the United States. HCV can lead to chronic disease in up to 85% of new cases.

What are the symptoms?

There are usually no symptoms. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms, dark urine, light stools, fever, fatigue, or nausea.

Who's at risk?

Needle sharing for drugs, tattoos, piercing, blood transfusion recipients before 1992, health care workers, hemodialysis patients, and people who have sex where blood is exchanged. STIs raise risk of transmission.

How can I avoid getting Hepatitis C?

Clean up infected blood with household bleach. Wear protective gloves. Don't share razors, toothbrushes, or needles. Have safer sex.

Hepatitis C Antibody Test

A Hepatitis C antibody test shows if you have ever been infected with HCV, not whether you still have Hepatitis C disease. To determine if you still have Hepatitis C disease, you need to get a viral load test.

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis means "inflammation of the liver" and often refers to three common viruses: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Non-viral hepatitis may also be caused by alcohol and other chemicals.

How can I protect my liver?

Maintain the basics of good health, including reducing alcohol intake, getting vaccinated against Hepatitis A & B, drinking lots of water and eating healthy foods.

Additional Resources

If you would like to find out more information about viral hepatitis and how to protect yourself, you can find information from the following organizations.

National Center for Infectious Diseases

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/>

HCV Advocate

www.hcvadvocate.org

American Liver Foundation

75 Maiden Lane, Suite 603
New York, NY 10038-4810
www.liverfoundation.org

1.800.GO.LIVER (465.4837)

1.888.4HEP.USA (443.7872)

For Further Information:

Project SAFE

Ocean Campus Cloud 405
Information, Referrals & Safer Sex Supplies

San Francisco AIDS Foundation Hotline

415.487.3000 or 1.800.FOR.AIDS, www.sfaf.org

Center For Disease Control & Prevention

CDC HIV & STI Info: 1.800.232.4636 or 1.800.CDC.INFO
www.cdc.gov

California AIDS Hotline

1.800.367.2437

San Francisco Sex Information Hotline

415.989.7374

Needle Exchange

HIV Prevention Project

415.241.1500, www.sfaf.org



HIV/STI Education Office
City College of San Francisco
50 Phelan Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112
415.452.5202

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What you need to know about it...