

Get the

STD Details on Hepatitis

PROTECT AGAINST

Hepatitis A and

Hepatitis B:

Vaccine-

Preventable

Hepatitis

Spread knowledge. Not disease.



What is viral hepatitis?

Viral hepatitis is a liver infection that can be caused by a variety of viruses. Hepatitis A and hepatitis B account for the greatest number of viral hepatitis infections each year in the United States and together, hepatitis A and hepatitis B can be referred to as *vaccine-preventable hepatitis (VPH)*. Other forms of viral hepatitis include hepatitis C, hepatitis D and hepatitis E. This brochure provides information on vaccine-preventable hepatitis (VPH), i.e. hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

How common are hepatitis A and hepatitis B?

Together, hepatitis A and hepatitis B cause more than 170,000 infections and more than 5,000 deaths each year in the U.S. Hepatitis A and hepatitis B cause nearly 90 percent of new viral hepatitis cases each year.

How does someone get hepatitis A and hepatitis B?

Hepatitis A

The hepatitis A virus can enter a person's body when he or she eats or drinks something contaminated with the stool of someone who has the disease. In rare cases, hepatitis A can be transmitted through blood transfusions. Symptoms of hepatitis A usually appear suddenly, but are not followed by the chronic problems that hepatitis B virus can cause.

Hepatitis B

The hepatitis B virus can infect a person if his or her mucous membranes (the soft skin found in openings such as the mouth, vagina, urethra or anus) or bloodstream are exposed to an infected person's blood, saliva, semen, or vaginal secretions. Symptoms appear more gradually than with hepatitis A. Unlike hepatitis A, the hepatitis B virus can stay in the body – sometimes for a lifetime – and eventually cause chronic, serious liver diseases and even death.

Can hepatitis be sexually transmitted?

Yes. The hepatitis A virus can be spread during oral-anal sex by the contaminated stool of someone who has the disease. About one quarter of hepatitis A cases can be attributed to household (sharing living quarters with an infected person) or sexual contact. In addition, certain populations may be at increased risk for contracting hepatitis A, such as gay and bisexual men.

Hepatitis B can be spread from person to person when infected blood or body fluids such as semen and vaginal secretions enters directly into the body through mucous membrane found in the mouth, vagina, urethra or anus. Over one half (54 percent) of hepatitis B infections are transmitted sexually. In fact, hepatitis B can be 100 times more contagious than HIV.

What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A and hepatitis B?

Adults with hepatitis A or hepatitis B may experience no symptoms or any of those listed below:

- Low-grade fever
- Fatigue (feeling tired all the time)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal discomfort or pain
- Dark-colored urine
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- For hepatitis B infection, rash or joint pain may occur prior to the onset of other symptoms

Children under 6 years of age seldom develop symptoms for hepatitis A.

A few patients with hepatitis B infection (1 percent) have a more severe course of illness and may experience sudden and severe liver failure within a short period of time after infection. This can be fatal.

Since you cannot always tell whether someone has hepatitis A or hepatitis B, it is important for you to take steps to protect yourself.

How can I protect myself against hepatitis A and hepatitis B?

There are a number of ways to protect yourself against hepatitis A and hepatitis B:

- Ask your healthcare practitioner about vaccines to prevent hepatitis; getting vaccinated is the most effective means of protection
- Practice abstinence (not having sex)
- Practice mutual monogamy with an uninfected partner
- Use latex condoms
- Avoid sharing drug needles or other drug-injection equipment
- Avoid contaminated food or water sources
- Practice good personal hygiene, such as hand-washing after using the toilet or changing diapers

It is also recommended that people with hepatitis C be vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B to protect themselves from further liver problems.



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