



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Viral hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. There are several types. The most common are type A, type B, and type C. Others are type D and type E.

### FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- There may be no symptoms, or symptoms may take weeks to months to appear. A person may first have flu-like symptoms, such as fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite.
- Jaundice (yellow eyes and skin) caused by a buildup of bile pigment in the blood.
- Dark urine and light, "clay-colored," or whitish stools.
- Pain in the upper-right abdomen.

### CAUSES

- Types A and E: the virus usually enters the body through water or food (especially raw shellfish) that has been contaminated by sewage (fecal-oral contact).
- Type B: usually sexually transmitted (contact with body fluids of an infected person), or by blood transfusions contaminated with the virus, or from injections with non-sterile needles or syringes. An infected mother can pass it to her newborn. Cause may be unknown.
- Type C: usually spread through intravenous (IV) drug use, blood transfusions, and other exposures to contaminated blood or its products. Cause may be unknown.
- Type D: occurs with infection of hepatitis type B.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Alcoholism, blood transfusions (especially if before 1992), kidney disease, blood-clotting disorders, organ transplants, having prior sexually transmitted diseases.
- Daycare centers (children and workers; especially those who change diapers).
- Infants born to mothers with hepatitis B or C.
- Health care workers.
- Jobs or work that involves contact with body fluids.
- Close contact with an infected person.
- Getting a tattoo or body piercing.
- People who engage in anal sex, and persons who have multiple sexual partners.
- IV drug abuse or intranasal cocaine use.
- Travel to countries where hepatitis is common.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid the risk factors listed above if possible.
- If exposed to someone with hepatitis, seek medical advice about receiving gamma-globulin injections to prevent or decrease the risk of some types of hepatitis.
- Persons at risk for hepatitis should get hepatitis A and B vaccines (other vaccines are being studied) and immune globulin in addition to vaccine. Your health care provider can advise you if you are in a risk group.
- Routine hepatitis B vaccine for all newborns.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most people recover fully in 1 to 4 months.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Liver disorders that could be fatal. This includes liver cancer.
- Chronic hepatitis. Some patients look and feel well and do not know they are infected. They can still pass the infection on to others. Some patients have symptoms that lead to liver damage (this can take 20 years).



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam. Medical tests may include blood and urine studies and liver function tests. A liver biopsy may be done by using a needle to remove liver tissue for microscopic exam.
- Acute (short term) hepatitis usually requires little or no treatment. Chronic hepatitis is treated with drugs. Hospital care may be needed for severe symptoms.
- Most patients can be cared for at home. Keeping apart from others is not needed. If you have hepatitis or are caring for someone with it, wash your hands often.
- To learn more: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) hotline: (888) 443-7232; website: [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/).

### MEDICATIONS

Interferon, steroids, or antivirals may be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY

- Extra rest may be helpful. People differ widely in the rate at which they can return to normal activity.
- Avoid contact sports until blood tests show no virus.
- Food handlers will be advised when to resume work.

### DIET

Small, nutritious meals help promote recovery. Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day. Don't drink alcohol.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of hepatitis or has been exposed to someone who has it.
- Extreme drowsiness, confusion, ongoing vomiting, jaundice lasting over 3 weeks, or unusual bleeding or bruising occurs during recovery.

Special notes:

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