

# THE ABCs OF VIRAL HEPATITIS

Millions of Americans are affected by viral hepatitis. When a person first gets viral hepatitis, he or she can develop a very mild illness with few or no symptoms or get a more serious illness lasting months. Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C can progress to a chronic, or lifelong, infection that can cause serious health problems including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death. Most people with chronic hepatitis do not know they are infected and can live with the disease for decades without having symptoms or feeling sick.

	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis C
<b>U.S. Statistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 3,500 new infections each year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated 1.2 million people have chronic Hepatitis B</li> <li>About 19,800 new infections each year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated 3.2 million people have chronic Hepatitis C</li> <li>About 29,700 new infections each year</li> </ul>
<b>Important Facts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of vaccine recommendations over the last several decades has resulted in a more than 90% decrease in new cases of Hepatitis A</li> <li>Outbreaks still occur in the United States</li> <li>Common in many countries, especially those without modern sanitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50-100 times more infectious than HIV</li> <li>An estimated two-thirds of people with Hepatitis B do not know they are infected</li> <li>1 in 12 Asian-Americans has chronic Hepatitis B</li> <li>Hepatitis B is a leading cause of liver cancer, especially among Asian-Americans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 50% of people with Hepatitis C do not know they are infected</li> <li>3 in 4 people living with Hepatitis C were born from 1945-1965 (or baby boomers)</li> <li>Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplants and also causes liver cancer</li> <li>Many people with Hepatitis C have no known reported risk factors</li> </ul>
<b>Can it become a chronic infection?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>
<b>Is there a vaccine?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>
<b>What causes it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis A virus (HAV)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis B virus (HBV)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis C virus (HCV)</li> </ul>
<b>Where is the virus found in the body?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood, semen, vaginal fluid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood</li> </ul>
<b>How is it spread?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ingestion of food, water, or other objects contaminated with fecal matter from an infected person (even in microscopic amounts)</li> <li>Sex with an infected person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact with blood, semen, or certain other body fluids from an infected person (even in microscopic amounts)</li> <li>Sex with an infected person</li> <li>Sharing personal items that have been contaminated with blood from an infected person, such as toothbrushes, razors, or glucose monitors</li> <li>An infected mother can pass it to her baby at birth</li> <li>Poor infection control has resulted in outbreaks in healthcare settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact with blood from an infected person (even in microscopic amounts)</li> <li>Sharing equipment that has been contaminated with blood from an infected person, such as needles, syringes, poorly sterilized tattoo or piercing equipment, and even medical equipment, such as glucose monitors</li> <li>Receiving a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992, which is when widespread screening of blood virtually eliminated Hepatitis C from the blood supply</li> <li>Poor infection control has resulted in outbreaks in healthcare settings</li> </ul>
<b>What happens if someone is infected?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People can be sick for a few weeks to a few months</li> <li>Most recover with no lasting liver damage</li> <li>Rarely fatal, although mortality is highest among the elderly and those with underlying liver disease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many newly infected persons are sick for a few weeks to a few months, while others have no symptoms</li> <li>Some people develop a chronic infection</li> <li>15%-25% of people with a chronic infection develop chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, liver failure, or liver cancer</li> <li>Medical treatment is available</li> <li>1,800 people in the United States die with Hepatitis B-related liver disease as documented from death certificates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75%-85% of people with Hepatitis C develop a chronic infection</li> <li>5%-20% of people with chronic Hepatitis C develop cirrhosis over a period of 20-30 years</li> <li>1%-5% of people with a chronic infection die from cirrhosis or liver cancer</li> <li>17,000 people in the United States die with Hepatitis C-related liver disease as documented from death certificates</li> <li>New treatments can cure the disease</li> </ul>
<b>Public Health Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaccinate all children at age 1 year</li> <li>Vaccinate adults at risk</li> <li>Ensure safe food and water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test people most likely to be infected (e.g., people born in Asia, Africa, and other regions with high rates of Hepatitis B)</li> <li>Test all pregnant women</li> <li>Vaccinate all infants at birth</li> <li>Vaccinate adults at risk</li> <li>Vaccinates all adults, age 19-59, with diabetes</li> <li>Ensure good infection control in health care and public safety settings</li> <li>Increase early detection and link to care and treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test all people born from 1945-1965 (or baby boomers)</li> <li>Test those at risk for Hepatitis C</li> <li>Screen blood and organ donors</li> <li>Educate populations at risk</li> <li>Ensure good infection control in health care and public safety settings</li> <li>Increase early detection and link to care and treatment</li> </ul>

Updated 2015

