

Hepatitis

Hepatitis is a disease that causes inflammation of the liver. The most common hepatitis virus infections are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Hepatitis B and C can become long-term infections of the liver and can cause serious liver disease.

How Hepatitis is Spread

There are many ways to get Hepatitis. The Hepatitis A virus lives in the feces of people who are infected. Hepatitis B and C viruses live in body fluids including blood, saliva and semen of infected people.

Hepatitis A is spread by: having close contact with a person who is infected, including sexual contact or contact with objects, food or water that are contaminated with the feces of an infected person.

Hepatitis B and C are spread by: having sex with an infected person, sharing needles with someone who has the virus, getting accidentally cut with an object that has bodily fluid of an infected person, having contact with open sores or blood of an infected person, mothers who are infected giving birth to their baby

Hepatitis B and C are not spread by coughing, sneezing, breastfeeding, hugging, or through food or water.

Symptoms

Many people who get Hepatitis never have any symptoms. Some people may get symptoms similar to the flu, such as: headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, joint pain, jaundice (the skin turns yellow), weakness and fatigue, fever, clay-colored bowel movements, loss of appetite. Symptoms appear between 28-120 days after infection. Symptoms usually last for several weeks, but can last for up to six months.

See your healthcare provider for diagnosing and treatment of hepatitis.

Prevention

Hand Washing - Hepatitis A can be prevented by washing your hands frequently with soap and water and always after going to the bathroom, changing a diaper and before eating.

Cleaning Up Body Fluids - Hepatitis viruses can live on surfaces for a number of days and still cause infection. The infected saliva, semen, fecal matter, or blood does not have to be new to infect someone and should be cleaned up with gloves and bleach.

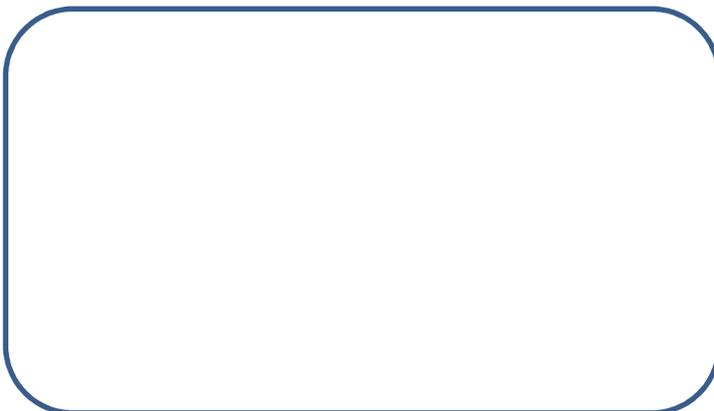
Vaccination or Immune Globulin - There is a vaccine for Hepatitis A and B, but no vaccine for Hepatitis C. For recent exposure or for pregnant women, immune globulin can be taken to prevent infection. Talk with your health care provider about receiving vaccinations or immune globulin if you think you may have come in contact with the virus.

Safe Sex - Always use a condom if you are not in a mutually monogamous relationship.

Sharing Personal Items - Do not share personal items that break the skin. This includes needles, razors and toothbrushes.

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