



# ABCs of Hepatitis C

If you have hepatitis you might have the following:

- Feel tired<sup>1</sup>
- Have muscle aches or joint pain<sup>4</sup>
- Have headaches<sup>4</sup>
- Not want to eat<sup>1</sup>
- Feel sick to your stomach<sup>1</sup>
- Have stomach pain<sup>1</sup>
- Have dark yellow urine<sup>1</sup>
- Have clay-colored stools<sup>1</sup>
- Have yellowish eyes and skin<sup>1</sup>

However, many people who have hepatitis C have no symptoms.

Hepatitis C is caused by a virus that harms your liver. If you think you might have hepatitis, see your doctor. Your doctor will do a blood test. You can prevent harm to your liver by getting tested. The three most common types of hepatitis in the U.S. are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.<sup>1</sup> Hepatitis is a serious illness that doesn't let your liver work the right way.<sup>2</sup>

Your liver helps keep you alive<sup>3</sup>:

- It fights infections and stops bleeding
- It removes drugs and poisons from your blood
- It stores energy

## Hepatitis A

The hepatitis A virus spreads through infected stool.<sup>5</sup> This can happen when an infected person doesn't wash their hands with soap and water after a bowel movement and it gets in their mouth. People can spread hepatitis A:

- When they fix meals or serve food<sup>6</sup>
- Through unclean diaper changing tables<sup>6</sup>
- Through food and water that is contaminated<sup>2</sup>

### Treatment of hepatitis A:

Most people get well on their own in a few weeks or months.<sup>6</sup>

### Prevention of hepatitis A:

You can get a hepatitis A vaccine.<sup>6</sup> Ask your doctor about it. Other ways to prevent it are:

- Always wash your hands after you use the toilet or change a diaper<sup>5</sup>
- Always wash your hands before fixing food or eating<sup>3</sup>
- Drink bottled water when you travel abroad<sup>3</sup>



# ABCs of Hepatitis C

## Hepatitis B

Damage caused by hepatitis B can lead to liver scarring, called cirrhosis (si-ROW-sis). It can cause liver cancer, liver failure, or death.<sup>7</sup> Hepatitis B spreads through infected blood, semen, and other body fluids.<sup>8</sup> Hepatitis B can be spread by<sup>8</sup>:

- Not using a condom when having sex with an infected person
- Sharing drug needles
- Getting a tattoo or body piercing with dirty tools
- Childbirth (mothers can pass it to their babies)

### Treatment of hepatitis B:

Some people fight it off with no treatment.<sup>6</sup> Those who can't get rid of the virus may be given shots or take pills. Treatment can last six months to a year.<sup>9</sup>

## Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is spread through infected blood.<sup>2</sup> In about 15% of people the virus goes away on its own within six months.<sup>10</sup> When that doesn't happen, the person has "chronic" (long-term) hepatitis C.<sup>2</sup> Chronic hepatitis C can lead to liver disease, cirrhosis, or liver cancer.<sup>11</sup>

### Treatment of hepatitis C:

Hepatitis C is most often treated with two drugs. One is a shot and the other is taken by mouth.<sup>6</sup> The treatment lasts six months to a year.<sup>12</sup>

### Prevention of hepatitis B and C<sup>8,13</sup>:

- You can get a hepatitis B vaccine. The treatment is three shots
- Use condoms when having sex
- Don't share drug needles
- Wear gloves if you have to touch other people's blood
- Don't use a toothbrush or razor used by an infected person
- Go somewhere that uses clean tools if you get tattoos or piercings

### References

1. CDC. Top 11 Most Frequently Asked Questions About Viral Hepatitis. [http://www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/common\\_faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/common_faqs.htm)
2. Hep-C Alert. FAQ. <http://www.hep-c-alert.org/faq.htm>
3. NDDIC. What I Need to Know About Hepatitis A. [http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepa\\_ez/index.htm](http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepa_ez/index.htm)
4. Raiter Clinic. The ABC's of Hepatitis. <http://www.raiterclinic.com/health%20articles/hepatitis.html>[http://www.cdc.gov/NCIDOD/DISEASES/hepatitis/common\\_faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/NCIDOD/DISEASES/hepatitis/common_faqs.htm)
5. CDC. Frequently Asked Questions About Hepatitis A. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/a/faqa.htm>
6. Hepatitis Foundation International. The ABC's of Hepatitis. [http://www.hepfi.org/living/liv\\_abc.html](http://www.hepfi.org/living/liv_abc.html)
7. CDC. Hepatitis B Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/b/faqb.htm>
8. NDDIC. What I Need to Know About Hepatitis B. [http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepb\\_ez/index.htm](http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepb_ez/index.htm)
9. Hepatitis B Foundation. Hepatitis B Treatments. <http://www.hepb.org/05-0242.hepb>
10. The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource. Hepatitis, HIV and Your Liver. <http://www.thebody.com/content/art14493.html>
11. CDC. Frequently Asked Questions About Hepatitis C. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/faq.htm>
12. Be in Charge Program. What to Expect. [http://www.beincharge.com/bic/application?namespace=main&origin=nav\\_left.jsp&event=content\\_display&event\\_input=what\\_to\\_expect&category=considering](http://www.beincharge.com/bic/application?namespace=main&origin=nav_left.jsp&event=content_display&event_input=what_to_expect&category=considering)
13. NDDIC. What I Need to Know About Hepatitis C. [http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepc\\_ez/](http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepc_ez/)