

The ABC's Of Viral Hepatitis

Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. To date, six different viruses that can cause hepatitis have been identified. Hepatitis can be acute or chronic. Acute hepatitis is when patients are infected with the virus for a short period of time. Chronic hepatitis is a disease in which patients remain infected with the hepatitis virus for a long time.

HEPATITIS A (HAV) Identified in 1973				
TRANSMISSION	SYMPTOMS	INCIDENCE	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spread through fecal-oral route. -Contaminated food and water. -Close personal contact with an infected person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin), fatigue, nausea, vomiting, fever/chills, pain in the liver area, dark urine, light colored stools, abdominal pain. -Young children may show no symptoms. Older children and adults may experience more severe symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Endemic in Africa and India where, by age 10, prevalence of antibodies to HAV reach 90 per cent. -Often spreads in epidemic proportions in younger children. -In developed countries, mainly occurs in adults who travel to endemic countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vaccines are available to prevent HAV. -Good sanitation and proper personal hygiene (e.g. hand washing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -None currently available. -Most patients begin to recover within three weeks.
HEPATITIS B (HBV) Identified in 1964				
TRANSMISSION	SYMPTOMS	INCIDENCE	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spread by contact with infected blood and other body fluids (e.g. semen, vaginal fluid, saliva). -Needle sticks. -Injection-drug use -Unprotected sexual contact. -Infected mother to child around the time of birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many people have no symptoms. -Symptoms can include jaundice, fever, rash, acute arthritis. -Chronic hepatitis B can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In Canada, about 300,000 people have chronic hepatitis B. -Prevalence is high in Chinese, Italian, Southeast Asian, Aboriginal and African populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vaccine is available to prevent infection. -Most provinces provide universal vaccination for school aged, pre-teen children and newborns. -Pregnant women are screened and if infected, babies are vaccinated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment options are available for people with chronic hepatitis B.



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HEPATITIS C (HCV) Identified in 1989				
TRANSMISSION	SYMPTOMPS	INCIDENCE/PREVALENCE	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spread through direct blood-to-blood contact with an infected person. -High risk: Blood and blood products prior to 1992; Injection drug use; Hemodialysis. -Lower risk: Sexual contact; Tattoos, body piercing; Mother to child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some patients experience fatigue, itchy skin, pain in the right-upper abdomen. -With advanced disease, symptoms may include swelling of abdomen and feet, jaundice, bruising, and confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An estimated 300,000 Canadians are infected with HCV. Many people do not have any symptoms and do not know they are infected. -All individuals born between 1945 and 1975 should be tested for HCV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hepatitis C is a curable disease. Cure rates are over 90%.
HEPATITIS D (HDV) Identified in 1977				
TRANSMISSION	SYMPTOMS	INCIDENCE	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Only people who have hepatitis B can get hepatitis D. -HDV is an incomplete RNA virus that can only replicate in tandem with HBV. Transmitted by blood, similar to HBV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Symptoms can include jaundice, fever, rash, acute arthritis. -People infected with hepatitis B and D experience a more severe liver disease. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Worldwide, about 5% of hepatitis B infected individuals are also infected with HDV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is no vaccine for hepatitis D. -Immunization against HBV will protect you from getting HDV. -Those immune to hepatitis B will not contract hepatitis D. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Treatment option is available for some patients.
HEPATITIS E (HEV) Identified in 1983				
TRANSMISSION	SYMPTOMS	INCIDENCE	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spread by contaminated food and water. -Endemic in regions of Asia, Africa and Central America. -Travellers to these areas are at risk of becoming infected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Similar to other forms of hepatitis. -High mortality rates in pregnant women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Common cause of viral hepatitis worldwide, but is rare in North America. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is no vaccine for hepatitis E licensed in Canada at this time. -Good sanitation and proper personal hygiene (e.g. hand washing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is currently no treatment for hepatitis E.

The information is current for April 2020.