

Hepatitis A & B

Facts You Need to Know

- ◆ Hepatitis A and B are viruses that infect the liver.
- ◆ Hepatitis A can cause jaundice and flu-like symptoms, but not long-term infection.
- ◆ Hepatitis B has similar initial symptoms, though about 30 percent of those infected show no visible sign of the virus.
- ◆ Hepatitis B can result in serious illness, such as cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer and even death.
- ◆ More than 170,000 people in the U.S. become infected with hepatitis A or B each year.
- ◆ About 750,000 people are chronically infected with hepatitis B. There are 77,000 new cases each year.



- ◆ One out of 20 people will become infected with hepatitis B at some point in their lives.
- ◆ About 5,000 people die each year from hepatitis B.
- ◆ Both hepatitis A and B are preventable by vaccines.
- ◆ The public is less familiar with hepatitis A & B than with all other common STDs.



Who's Likely to Get Hepatitis A & B?

- ◆ People at risk for hepatitis A include: those living in communities or traveling to countries where the virus is prevalent, those living in households with infected members, drug users, men who have sex with men, day care workers and those with chronic liver disease.
- ◆ People at risk for hepatitis B include: health-care workers, drug users, men who have sex with men, people with multiple sex partners and household members of those with hepatitis B.

How Are Hepatitis A & B Transmitted?

- ◆ Hepatitis A is spread when someone comes in oral contact with the stool (feces) of an infected person, usually through contaminated food. Hepatitis A is also transmitted by oral-anal sex.
- ◆ Hepatitis B is spread through the blood and bodily fluids of an infected person. More than half of all hepatitis B infections come from sexual activity.
- ◆ In addition, hepatitis B can be transmitted when infected needles are shared by drug users and, among health-care workers, from needle sticks in the workplace.
- ◆ Hepatitis B can also be transmitted during delivery from an infected mother to her baby.
- ◆ About one-third of all people with hepatitis B don't know how they became infected.
- ◆ The hepatitis B virus can be 100 times more contagious than HIV.

Costs and Consequences

- ◆ Nearly 1 in 5 people infected with hepatitis A must be hospitalized.
- ◆ In rare cases, hepatitis A can lead to death. There are approximately 100 deaths due to hepatitis A infection per year in the U.S.
- ◆ The medical costs for hepatitis B are \$51.4 million a year.
- ◆ In 1997, the average medical cost for each case of hepatitis B was \$668 a year.

Prevention and Treatment Basics

- ◆ Both hepatitis A and B are preventable by vaccines. The hepatitis A vaccine should be given to at-risk groups older than two years. The hepatitis B vaccine should be given to everyone 18 years and under. It should also be given to at-risk adults.
- ◆ Washing hands with soap after changing diapers or using the toilet, and before eating can reduce the risk of hepatitis A and B.
- ◆ Using condoms regularly and correctly can reduce the risk of hepatitis B.
- ◆ A preparation of antibodies known as immune globulin can provide short-term protection against hepatitis A infection.
- ◆ While rest and proper nutrition can alleviate some symptoms, there is currently no available treatment for hepatitis A.
- ◆ While there are medications available for the treatment of chronic hepatitis B infection, there is no cure.