

# Hepatitis

The word Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. Not everybody who has viral Hepatitis (A, B, C, D, E, G) will develop symptoms. But in those that do, the symptoms can be either mild or severe. Persons with acute hepatitis can have flu-like symptoms, muscle aches, body aches, mild fever, malaise, lack of appetite, nausea, vomiting and fatigue as well. They may also have abdominal pain and tenderness. In very severe cases, a person can turn yellow. This is called jaundice. There are also non-viral causes of Hepatitis that can cause very similar symptoms. It's important to remember that most of these symptoms resemble those of many other illnesses. A person must see their physician and get tested to determine the cause of their symptoms. Having these symptoms can be due to numerous causes other than Hepatitis. This is why laboratory testing is so important to diagnose these symptoms. And again, many people with Hepatitis have no symptoms at all.

Some forms of Hepatitis (especially Hepatitis B and C) can lead to cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer: usually years after infection. Some people who have Hepatitis (especially Hepatitis B and C) may die of the infection.

## **Hepatitis A**

Hepatitis A is transmitted through the oral-fecal route. It is usually transmitted through food. Sexually, however, it could be transmitted by giving oral-anal sex (rimming) to an infected person. It is not transmitted by intercourse. In terms of when a person starts showing symptoms of Hepatitis A after they're infected, the incubation period is 15-50 days, with an average of 28-30 days. A person would start showing positive on a Hepatitis A antibody test during the acute illness, and for about 4-6 months afterwards. There is now a very effective vaccine against Hepatitis A.

## **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is transmitted the same way as HIV, however Hepatitis B is up to 100 times more infectious than HIV. If a person engages in unprotected sex or shares needles, infection with Hepatitis B would be a possibility, even more so than HIV (assuming the partner is infected with either virus). The incubation period (when a person starts showing symptoms) for Hepatitis B is usually 45-180 days with an average of 60-90 days. There is now a very effective vaccine against Hepatitis B.

## **Hepatitis C**

Hepatitis C can occasionally be transmitted sexually, although it's most often transmitted through direct blood-to-blood contact. The incubation period for Hepatitis C is 2 weeks to 6 months, but most commonly 6-9 weeks. There are tests for Hepatitis C, but they often can't distinguish between recent and previous infection. Improvements to Hepatitis C testing is currently underway. Vaccines that have been developed against Hepatitis A and B will not protect you against Hepatitis C, nor other forms of Hepatitis.

## **Hepatitis D**

Hepatitis D (also known as Delta Hepatitis) is transmitted the same way as Hepatitis B. If a person has Hepatitis D by itself, it is harmless. But if a person has Hepatitis B and Hepatitis D, this can cause serious illness.

## **Hepatitis E**

Hepatitis E is most often found in developing countries. It is transmitted the same way as Hepatitis A.

## **Hepatitis G**

Hepatitis G virus is transmitted through blood-to- blood contact, and there is some suggestion that it may be sexually transmitted as well. Mother-to-child transmission has also been reported. This virus has been linked to both acute and chronic hepatitis. The symptoms it causes tend to be mild, and jaundice may not be seen. Because Hepatitis G has been so recently discovered, there's still a lot of things we don't yet know about this form of Hepatitis.

