

An overview of heps A, B and C



Hepatitis C (HCV)

A virus that causes inflammation of the liver.
Can possibly lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer in chronic cases.
Chronic for about 75% of people who contract HCV.

2-26 weeks.
Average 6-9 weeks.

Blood-to-blood contact.
HCV positive mother to newborn baby (low risk).

Sharing any equipment when injecting drugs.
Receiving blood products prior to Feb 1990 in Australia.
Skin penetration (see left) with non-sterile equipment.
Medical procedures in some overseas countries.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

A virus that causes inflammation of the liver.
Can possibly lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer in chronic cases.
Chronic (long term) for about 5% of adults who contract HBV.
Chronic (long term) for about 95% of children who contract HBV.

6-26 weeks.
Average 8-12 weeks.

Blood-to-blood contact.
Sexual contact.
HBV positive mother to newborn baby.

Sexual activity with HBV positive person.
Sharing any equipment when injecting drugs.
Skin penetration (eg. tattooing or body piercing) with non-sterile equipment.
Medical procedures in some overseas countries.

Hepatitis A (HAV)

A virus that causes inflammation of the liver.
Does not lead to chronic (long term) liver disease.

2-7 weeks.
Average 4 weeks
Incubation/Window period
(from time of exposure until antibodies can be detected).

Oral-faecal contact.
Contaminated food and water or contaminated hand to mouth contact.

An infected person's unwashed hands coming into contact with food, drinking and eating utensils.
Household or sexual contact with an infected person.
Travelling through developing countries.
Oral / anal sex with an infected person.

What is it?

Incubation or window period

Transmitted by

Behaviours which put people at risk

Hepatitis C (HCV)

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis A

Symptoms in acute (short term) infection.

Adults may have light coloured faeces, dark urine, fatigue, fever and jaundice (yellowing of eyes and sometimes, the skin).
Usually lasts for 1-3 weeks.
Some people, especially young children, may have no symptoms.

Flu-like symptoms, dark urine, light faeces, jaundice, fatigue and fever.
Most people experience symptoms.
Occasionally very severe hepatitis.

Mild flu-like symptoms can present but are uncommon.
Very rarely, people may experience symptoms of acute hepatitis.

Symptoms in chronic (long term) infection.

None.

Fatigue, nausea, muscle aches and pains, abdominal discomfort or jaundice.

Fatigue, nausea, muscle aches and pains or abdominal discomfort.

Treatment

Not applicable.

Lamivudine (tablets)
Interferon

Combination therapy with pegylated interferon & ribavirin.

Some people choose to use complementary therapies for symptom management.

Some people choose to use complementary therapies for symptom management.

Vaccine

Yes.
It is safe & effective.

Yes.
It is safe & effective.
Part of universal childhood vaccination.

No

Prevention

Vaccination.
Immunoglobulin after exposure.
Washing hands after going to the toilet and before eating.
If travelling to developing countries, consider vaccination and seek advice on food & water risks.

Vaccination.
Do not share any equipment when injecting.
Immunoglobulin after exposure.
Practice safe sex.
Avoid blood-to-blood contact.
Follow standard infection control guidelines for first aid.
Avoid sharing personal items (eg. toothbrushes or razors) which could allow the transfer of blood from one person to another.

Do not share equipment when injecting.
Avoid blood-to-blood contact.
Follow standard infection control guidelines for first aid.
Avoid sharing personal items (eg. toothbrushes or razors) which could allow the transfer of blood from one person to another.