

Hepatitis overview

This serious liver disease can be a game-changer.

Hepatitis is an inflammatory disorder of the liver caused by viruses, drugs, or toxins. It is an increasingly common disease and a serious worldwide health concern.

The most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A, B, and C. In recent years, hepatitis D and E viruses have also been identified. Early indicators of hepatitis include jaundice and fever-like symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, and muscle aches. However, these viruses sometimes cause no symptoms at all.

Hepatitis A is usually a mild short-term illness. But hepatitis B and C often cause long-term infections. Hepatitis D is uncommon, while hepatitis E occurs primarily in underdeveloped countries.¹

An estimated 4.4 million Americans live with chronic hepatitis; most don't even know they're infected. About 80,000 new infections occur each year. Globally, 71 million people are estimated to have chronic hepatitis C.

Generally, the hepatitis viruses are transmitted through feces, blood, or bodily fluids. Fecal contamination of water and food, eating undercooked shellfish, and using contaminated needles are all common routes of transmission. Certain toxins like alcohol and anti-HIV drugs can also lead to nonviral hepatitis.²

Additionally, hepatitis is considered a sexually transmitted disease that is over 100 times more infectious than HIV.

Various medications are used to treat hepatitis B, C, and D. Most people who have hepatitis A or E usually get well on their own after several weeks. As the prevalence of hepatitis grows, doctors have been encouraged to increase screening for the disease.³

If you feel that you are at risk for this condition, you should speak with your primary care provider. And as with any aspect of your health and wellness, Best Doctors can give you peace of mind with expert reviews of your medical records and detailed reports that can eliminate uncertainty and provide an objective new perspective on your health.

¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/hepatitis-overview> (subscription required)

²<http://www.healthcommunities.com/viral-hepatitis/hepatitis-overview-incidence-prevalence.shtml>

³<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3290915/>

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