Hepatitis A Fact Sheet

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus

The hepatitis A virus causes an infection of the liver. The virus is passed in a person's feces (stool).

Anyone can get hepatitis A if they haven't had it before

People can get it from another child or adult who has hepatitis A, or by eating food contaminated by someone who has the hepatitis A virus. Raw or undercooked shellfish that come from contaminated waters can also be a source. The symptoms start about 4 weeks after infection (with a range of 2-6 weeks).

Symptoms to look for:

- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Brown, tea-colored urine
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pains

Not everyone gets sick from hepatitis A

About half of the adults who catch hepatitis A get sick. Only a few children get sick when they catch hepatitis A. But all people who catch the virus can spread it to others. The virus is in the stool for about 3 weeks: 2 weeks before illness starts and one week after.

Handwashing can stop the spread

Wash hands with soap and water:

- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers
- Before touching food and before eating

Vaccine and IG are ways to prevent getting hepatitis A

Vaccination is the best way to protect against hepatitis A before you get exposed. Get vaccinated if you travel overseas to, or live in areas with high rates of hepatitis A, use street drugs, have chronic liver disease, or if you are a man and have sex with other men. Vaccination should protect you for the rest of your life.

A shot called "IG" (immune globulin) can help stop hepatitis A if given early enough after exposure to people who had close contact with a case. IG will only protect you for a few months.

See your doctor or call the health department

If you or people in your family have these symptoms, if you have been in close contact with someone who has hepatitis A, or if you want to get hepatitis A vaccine, call your doctor or your local health department.
Hepatitis B Fact Sheet

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV)

The virus is in blood and other body fluids

The virus is in blood, semen, menstrual blood, and other body fluids of a person with hepatitis B. 5-10% of adults and about 90% of babies who catch hepatitis B will go on to "carry" or keep the virus for the rest of their lives. "Hepatitis B carriers" can pass the virus on to others.

Hepatitis B virus is spread by exposure to blood and body fluids

The virus can be spread during sex, by sharing needles, by getting stuck with a dirty needle, or by getting blood or other infected body fluids in the mouth, eyes, or onto broken skin. The virus also can be passed from mother to baby, usually at the time of birth. The virus is not spread by shaking hands, hugging, sharing food or drink.

Some people are at higher risk of hepatitis B:

- Drug users who share needles
- Men who have sex with other men
- Anyone who has unprotected sex with a man or woman who has the hepatitis B virus
- Anyone who has many sex partners
- Babies born to mothers who have the virus
- People born in Asia, the Caribbean, South America, Africa, the Pacific Islands and their children, as well as native Americans and Alaskan natives
- People who have hemophilia or who are on kidney dialysis
- Health care workers, emergency workers, laboratory workers, and others who have contact with blood and body fluids
- People who live with a person who is a hepatitis B carrier
- People who live or work in institutions for the mentally retarded

Symptoms to look for:

- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Dark-colored urine, light stool

Most children and about half of all adults who get hepatitis B never feel sick at all. For these people, it takes a blood test to tell if they have the virus. The blood test may not show the infection until 2-6 months after contact with the virus. Carriers are at risk of liver problems later in life, like liver cancer or cirrhosis.

Treatment for hepatitis B:

People who are sick with hepatitis B need rest, fluids, and the right diet. This means avoiding alcohol and some medicines. Certain carriers may need medications such as interferon. Ask your doctor for further information.

Prevent hepatitis B

Avoid exposure: Use latex condoms (rubbers) when you have sex; don't share needles; don't share personal care items like toothbrushes, razor blades, or nail clippers; avoid exposure to blood and body fluids at work.

Get vaccinated: If you are in "close" contact with someone with the virus (sex partner, mother-baby contact, sharing needles, living in the same house with a carrier), or if you work in contact with blood, ask about getting three shots of hepatitis B vaccine to protect yourself. Babies born to mothers with the virus should get the vaccine and a shot called HBIG (hepatitis B immune globulin). Routine hepatitis B vaccination of all newborn babies is now recommended.

Tell certain people and don't donate blood: People who are sick with hepatitis B or who are carriers should tell their doctors, dentists, and people they have sex with or share needles with. And remember, don't donate blood if you have, or ever had hepatitis B, even if you never felt sick.
Hepatitis C Fact Sheet

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus

The virus is in blood and other body fluids

The virus can be found in the blood, semen, menstrual blood, and other body fluids of a person with hepatitis C. It is believed that most people who catch hepatitis C will go on to carry the virus in their blood and other body fluids for the rest of their lives, and could pass the virus on to others.

Hepatitis C virus is mainly spread by exposure to blood and blood products

The virus can be spread by transfusion of blood containing hepatitis C virus and by sharing dirty needles used to shoot drugs. Since 1992, all donated blood in the U.S. has been tested to detect blood infected with hepatitis C virus. The virus is not spread by casual contact such as shaking hands, hugging, sharing food or drink.

Certain people are at higher risk of getting hepatitis C

Anyone can catch hepatitis C, but some people are more likely to catch it. People at higher risk are:

- People who received blood transfusions before 1992
- Drug users who share needles

Other people who may be at increased risk are:

- Anyone who has unprotected sex with a man or woman who has acute hepatitis C or who is a hepatitis C carrier
- Babies born to mothers who have hepatitis C
- Health care workers, dental care workers, emergency workers, laboratory workers, and others who have contact with blood and body fluids

Symptoms to look for:

- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Urine that is dark in color

It takes 2 weeks to 6 months from the time of exposure until a person gets sick, but most commonly 6 to 9 weeks. Many people infected with hepatitis C have no symptoms at all and only find out they are infected when they have blood tests for liver function or hepatitis C.

There is limited treatment for hepatitis C

People who are sick with hepatitis C need rest and fluids. Some people need to be hospitalized or may need other medications. Ask your doctor to explain how alcohol and some medicines may hurt your liver.

Prevent hepatitis C: avoid exposure, and practice good hygiene

Those at risk should be careful to avoid getting exposed: injectable drugs users should not share needles or works with others; the use of latex condoms may decrease the risk of catching or passing hepatitis C virus through sex.
AIDS and HIV Fact Sheet

AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

When a person is infected with HIV, the virus infects and can kill certain cells in the immune system called T-helper cells. This weakens the immune system so that other specific infections can occur. The person is diagnosed as having AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) when they become sick with other specific infections or when the number of T-helper cells has dropped very low.

People at highest risk of AIDS and HIV infection are:

- People who share needles
- Men who have sex with other men
- Babies born to mothers who have HIV
- People who received blood transfusions or blood products before 1985 (antibody test available) which might have been infected with HIV
- Anyone who has sex with anyone who has or is at risk of AIDS or HIV infection

HIV is in blood and other body fluids

The virus is in the blood, semen, menstrual blood, vaginal secretions, and breast milk, and rarely in saliva and tears. The virus can be there even if the person has no symptoms of HIV infection or AIDS. People who are infected with HIV will carry the virus for the rest of their lives.

HIV is spread by exposure to HIV infected blood and HIV infected body fluids

HIV can be spread during sex, by sharing dirty needles to inject drugs, or from mother to baby (before or during birth, or by breast feeding). HIV is rarely spread by getting stuck by a needle, or by getting blood or other infected body fluids onto a mucous membrane (mouth or eyes) or onto broken skin. The virus is not spread by casual contact like living in the same household, or working with a person who carries HIV.

Certain symptoms and conditions may be associated with HIV/AIDS

These symptoms and conditions may include: fever, weight loss, swollen lymph glands in the neck, under arms or groin, white patches in the mouth (thrush), certain cancers (Kaposi's sarcoma, certain lymphomas, certain invasive cervical cancers), and infections (Pneumocystis pneumonia, certain types of meningitis, toxoplasmosis, certain blood infections, TB, etc.).

A blood test may tell if you have HIV Infection or AIDS

You can get a HIV blood test at your doctor's office or at Counseling and Testing Sites throughout Maryland. Call your local health department or the AIDS Hotline (1-800-638-6252) for information.

There is treatment for people with HIV Infection and AIDS

Many drugs are available to treat the infections and cancers associated with AIDS. There are also drugs available for people with HIV infection that can help prevent them from getting sicker.

HIV and AIDS are preventable:

- Abstinence, monogamy (with an uninfected partner), use of barrier protection (condoms) are the most protective prevention strategies.
- People who use IV drugs should try to get off drugs. If they can't they should always use new needles or should clean needles and works with bleach and water.
- It is recommended that people with HIV or AIDS should discuss their HIV serostatus with their doctors and dentists, and inform their sex and needle sharing partners.
- Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy are encouraged to talk with their doctor about getting tested for HIV. If a mother is known to be infected with HIV, there is treatment to decrease the chance that her baby will become infected.
- Practices called Universal Precautions and Standard Precautions such as the use of gloves, goggles, gowns, etc., are used by health care practitioners for prevention of transmission of any communicable disease including HIV.
PROPER HANDWASHING TECHNIQUE

Appendix A

1. Open faucet
2. Wet hands thoroughly
3. Apply soap
4. Rub vigorously
   10 seconds or more
5. Rinse thoroughly
6. Dry hands with disposable towel
7. Use towel to turn off faucet
PROPER REMOVAL OF GLOVES

Appendix B

1. Grasp glove at heel of hand without touching skin.

2. Pull glove toward fingers.

3. Remove glove from hand.

4. While holding soiled glove, insert index finger and middle of free hand under glove at cuff.

5. Pull glove toward fingers.

6. As glove is removed it is turned inside out. over the glove that has already been removed.

7. Discard contaminated gloves in appropriate waste container and wash hands.