

What is Hepatitis?

easy read

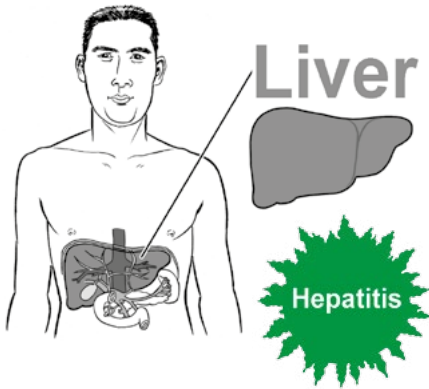
A

B

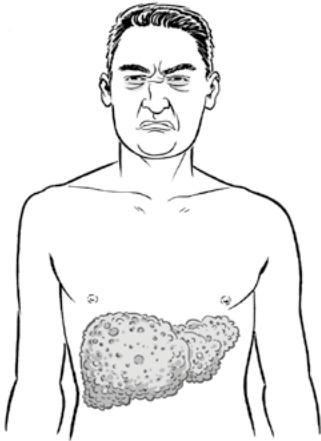
C



What is hepatitis?



Hepatitis is a disease that can seriously damage your liver and make you very ill if you do not get treatment.

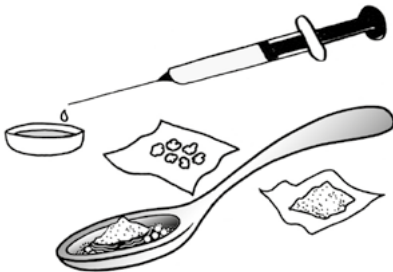
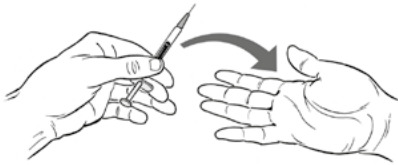
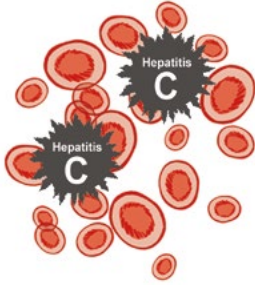


Some types of hepatitis will pass without causing lasting damage to the liver. Other types can last for many years and cause **cirrhosis** which is scarring of the liver.



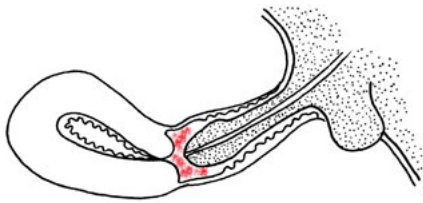
There are different kinds of hepatitis caused by viruses that can be passed on from person to person in different ways.

What puts you at risk of hepatitis?



Hepatitis C is a virus passed through blood to blood contact such as:

- Sharing needles for injecting drugs
- Sharing spoons and other drug taking equipment



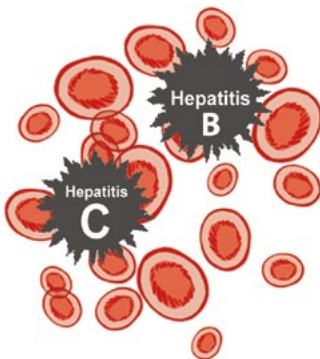
- Sharing needles for tattooing and body piercing with unclean equipment
- Sex (where blood is present)
- Sharing toothbrushes (because of bleeding gums)



- Sharing razors
(because people may have cut themselves)



- Medical treatment or tattooing and piercing in foreign countries such as India, Africa, Central and South America, the Far East and Eastern Europe

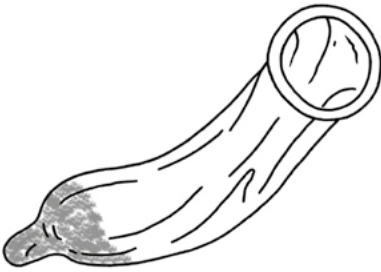


Hepatitis B can be passed between people through:

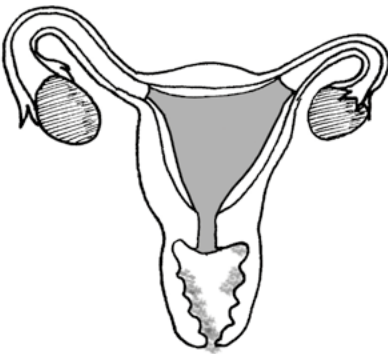
- Blood (in the same ways as hepatitis C)



- From an infected mother passing it to her child at birth.



- Semen



- and Vaginal fluids

How do I know if I have hepatitis?

Some people may experience signs of liver failure such as:



Headaches



Feeling sick



Being sick



Muscle and joint pain, a high temperature (fever) of 38C / 104F or more



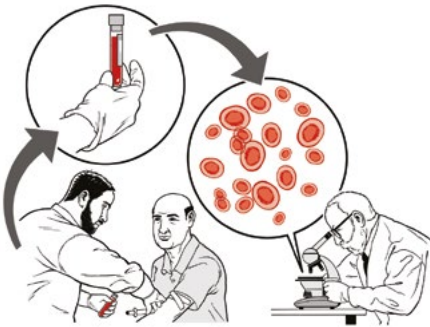
Sometimes a yellowing of the eyes and skin. This is called **jaundice**



Not everyone who has hepatitis will get symptoms they can see. The virus can harm your liver even if there are no signs.



It is important to think carefully about whether you may have been at risk.



If you think you might have been at risk you should get tested.



If you do have the virus and do not get treatment you could risk getting chronic liver disease.

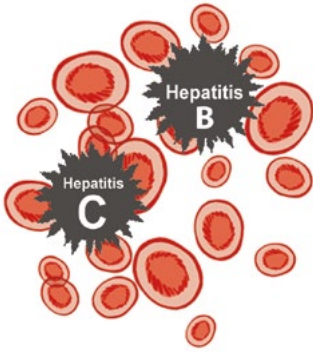
The difference between hepatitis B and C



There is a vaccine that protects against getting hepatitis B.



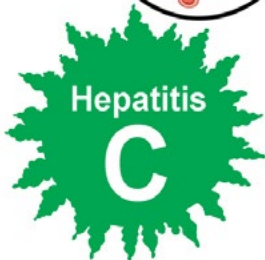
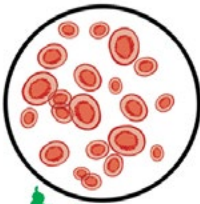
There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.



Both viruses can be caught by blood to blood contact.



Hepatitis B is easier to catch than hepatitis C and can also be passed on through saliva, semen and vaginal fluids.



Hepatitis C can only be passed on where blood is present.



Hepatitis B can be passed on through having unprotected sex with a person who is infected. Hepatitis C is much less likely to be passed on in this way unless blood is present.



It can be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby at birth.



Neither virus is easily spread through day to day contact. You cannot get hepatitis B or C by shaking hands, coughing or sneezing or by using the same toilet.

Treatment for hepatitis B and C



There are different treatments for the 2 viruses:

Hepatitis B can be controlled with treatment.



With the right treatment Hepatitis C can be cured in many cases.

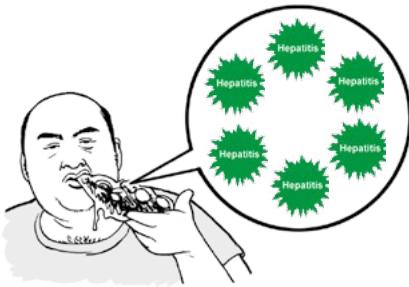


You should get tested for Hepatitis C if you think you have been at risk.

Other types of hepatitis



Hepatitis A is more common in countries lacking proper toilets and clean drinking water.



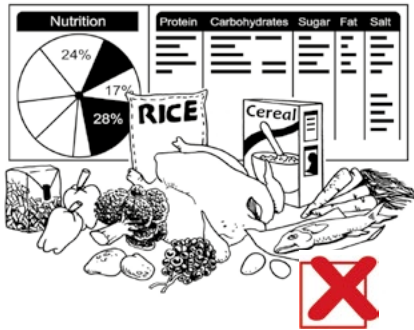
It is usually caught by putting something in your mouth that has had contact with the poo of someone with hepatitis A.



A vaccination can protect you if you travel to countries such as India, Africa, Central and South America, the Far East or Eastern Europe.



Living with hepatitis



If you have hepatitis B or C it is important to have a healthy lifestyle to help you to stay well.



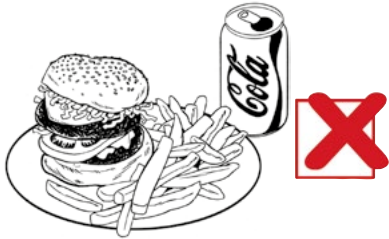
Alcohol, smoking, and eating fatty foods can make liver disease worse.



Being overweight or extreme dieting and eating too little also has a bad affect on your liver. Try to keep a healthy weight.



Try to avoid drinking too much alcohol and to stop smoking.

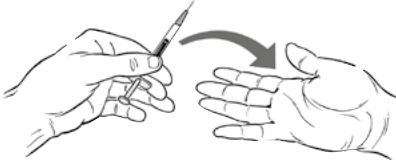


Try to eat less fat and eat more fruit and vegetables.



Ask a nurse or doctor for advice on how to do this.

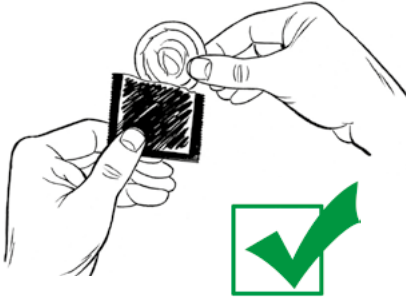
How can I stay safe and free of hepatitis?



- **Never share** needles, syringes, spoons or filters with other drug users.

- Do not share bank notes or straws to snort cocaine.

- **Avoid fighting and do not bite other people.** Any activity that draws blood can put you at risk.



- **Use a condom** during sex: including anal and oral sex.



- Get **vaccinated** for hepatitis A and B if you are anywhere where the risk is high, for example, high risk parts of the world or in prison.

If I am worried, what do I do?



It is important to know if you do have hepatitis so that you can get the right medical help you need to stay well.

If you are worried that you might have hepatitis see your doctor.



Knowing for certain that you have hepatitis means you can be extra careful not to pass it on to the people you are close to.



If you are worried about hepatitis the following organisations can give you advice and information:



The Hepatitis C Trust

www.hepctrust.org.uk

helpline@hepctrust.org.uk

Helpline:



020 7089 6221



The Hepatitis B Foundation

www.hepb.org.uk

admin@hepb.org.uk



The British Liver Trust

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

Information line:



01425 481320

info@britishlivertrust.org.uk

Where can I get further information



If you have any questions, you can talk to your GP or nurse.



Sexual health/Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM)

clinics provide free, confidential advice.

Look at **NHS Choices** website for more information:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/STIs/Pages/VisitinganSTIclinic.aspx



The Terrence Higgins Trust

website has a local clinic finder:

<http://www.tht.org.uk/our-charity/Get-help-now/Service-finder>

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