

HEPATITIS

WHAT IS HEPATITIS?

Hepatitis is disease of the liver that can be caused by a variety of infections. The three most common types of viral hepatitis are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. All three can be sexually transmitted, though some are easier to get through sex than others.

WHY SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT HEPATITIS?

The liver helps purify and detoxify the blood and produces many important compounds—especially proteins—that are necessary for good health. Hepatitis viruses disrupt the essential work of the liver.

Hepatitis A causes nausea, diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and eyes). You can have disease for up to 6-9 months, and death is rare. Following recovery, there is no long-term (chronic) infection state. Once you have had Hepatitis A, you cannot get it again.

Hepatitis B causes nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fatigue, joint pain, and jaundice. In a small percentage of cases, Hepatitis B becomes chronic, and in about 15-25% of chronic cases, it can be fatal.

Hepatitis C can cause chronic liver disease and death, and can damage the liver even without causing overt symptoms. Approximately 70-85% of individuals with Hepatitis C will develop chronic infection. Co-infection with HIV can lead to more rapid progression of Hepatitis C.

IS HEPATITIS AN STD?

You can get Hepatitis A, B, and C from having sex.

Hep A is transmitted when microscopic amounts of fecal matter from an infected person get into the mouth of another person. This commonly occurs when people have anal sex, and is of course unavoidable when people engage in rimming (oral/anal contact).

Hep B is transmitted through unprotected sex. It is also transmitted through even small amounts of blood-to-blood contact (such as through shared toothbrushes, and razors, or sharing injection drug works).

Hep C is transmitted mostly through blood-to-blood contact (like sharing toothbrushes, razors, or injection drug works), and may be transmitted sexually, especially during rough or poorly-lubricated unprotected anal penetration, including fisting, when microscopic tearing of anal tissues and bleeding may occur.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM HEPATITIS?

Vaccines are available for both Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. If you're not vaccinated, **GET THE VACCINE**. In the mean time, the use of latex condoms and/or dental dams provides good protection.

There is no vaccine against Hepatitis C. The best protection is not to shoot drugs or share needles and to avoid blood-to- blood contact (such as from sharing needles, razors, or toothbrushes) and to use latex condoms (and plenty of lube) when having anal sex.

CAN HEPATITIS BE TREATED?

Treatments for Hepatitis are available.

For Hep A, treatment consists mainly of bed rest and drinking plenty of fluids until the disease runs its course.

For chronic Hep B and Hep C, drug treatments are available that can reduce the likelihood of further damage to the liver. The goal of treatment is to reduce the level of virus in the blood to an undetectable level over a sustained period.

For more information about Hepatitis visit: www.liverfoundation.org.

To schedule free or low-cost Hep A and B vaccinations, visit: www.hepclinics.org.

TO FIND AN STD CLINIC NEAR YOU GO TO WWW.HIVTEST.ORG OR WWW.INSPO.TORG.