

Hepatitis A and B



Think about it.
Talk about it.
Protect yourself
 and your partner.



Hepatitis is a virus that attacks the liver. There are different kinds of hepatitis viruses. Two of the most common are Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Hepatitis viruses can make you sick for several weeks. In some cases, hepatitis can damage the liver and cause more serious problems.

How do people get hepatitis?

Each kind of hepatitis is spread differently.

Hepatitis A is spread when very small pieces of human feces (stool) are swallowed.

- People who do not wash their hands can accidentally get feces into water or food other people drink and eat.
- Feces can be spread from one person's hand to another person's hand and then into the mouth.
- Sexual contact that involves the anus can also spread the virus.

Hepatitis B is spread by blood or other body fluids.

- Body fluids include men's sexual fluid (semen and "pre-cum") and women's vaginal fluid.
- Improperly sterilized needles used for drugs or tattoos can spread the virus. Only a very small amount of blood is needed to spread the virus.
- Deep kissing (or "French kissing") can spread the virus if someone has a mouth sore or if their gums are bleeding a little.
- People can spread the virus before they get sick and after they feel better.

- You can't tell who has hepatitis by how they look.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis?

Some people with hepatitis don't have symptoms, but most people feel some or all of the following:

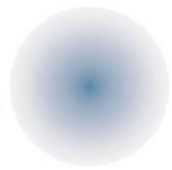
- extreme tiredness
- muscle weakness
- loss or lack of appetite (not hungry)
- nausea or vomiting
- fever
- bloated and painful stomach
- dark colored urine ("pee")
- yellow tint to eyes and skin

Who should get vaccinated?

There are two types of vaccines to help prevent Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. If you are in a high-risk group, the chart on the back of this sheet will tell you which vaccines you need. If you do not fit into one of these high-risk groups, you are unlikely to get hepatitis. Everyone, whether or not they are in a high-risk group, should follow the safety tips on the back of this sheet to avoid hepatitis and be safe.

If you need the vaccine, be sure to get all the shots. If you don't get all the shots, you may not be fully protected.

- The Hepatitis A vaccine takes two shots: one shot, and then another 6 to 12 months later.
- The Hepatitis B vaccine takes three shots: one shot, another one month later, and a third six months after the first shot.



Who should be vaccinated:

- Children entering kindergarten and children entering 7th grade
 - All adults under age 25
 - Health care employees who come into contact with blood or body fluids
 - People who have had a new sexual partner or more than one sexual partner in the past year
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- People with chronic liver disease
 - Workers in day care centers
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- Men who have sex with men
 - People who travel frequently to, or stay in, developing countries for three or more months
 - People who use injection drugs (like heroin) or other street drugs and their sexual partners
 - People who live with, or have sex with, someone with hepatitis

Vaccines needed:

Hep B vaccine only

Hep A vaccine only

Both
Hep A and Hep B
vaccines

- Avoid hand and mouth contact with the anus since even a tiny amount of human feces (stool) can be infected.
- If your gums bleed or if you have a mouth sore, avoid oral sex and deep kissing.
- Get tested for HIV.

Should I get tested to see if I have hepatitis?

- **You may need to be tested for hepatitis if . . .**
 - you are sick and have the symptoms listed on the front side of this sheet, or
 - you live with or have had sex with someone who may have hepatitis.
- **Some people are tested before they get vaccinated.**
 - Hepatitis is more common among some people depending upon their age, jobs, sexual activity, or where they were born.
 - Some of these people may not need the vaccine because they have already been exposed to hepatitis and are immune (can't get it again).
 - Your doctor will tell you if you need to be tested before you get vaccinated.

How can I avoid hepatitis?

• **Protect yourself from blood and feces.**

- Wash your hands with hot water and soap every time you finish using the bathroom. Tiny amounts of human feces (stool) can spread hepatitis.
- Wash your hands before putting your finger in your mouth or eyes. You may have picked up the virus during the day.
- If you are cleaning up feces, blood, or other body fluids, wear gloves and clean surfaces with bleach and water.
- Do not share chewing gum or pre-chew food for a baby.

- Do not share toothbrushes, nail clippers, or razors to avoid spreading tiny amounts of blood.
- Use bleach to clean needles for drugs, piercing, or tattooing.

• **Practice safer sex.**

- All types of hepatitis can be spread through sex. If you are having sex with a new partner, or if you are in a relationship where one or both of you have sex with other people, protect yourself.
- Get the Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccines. Be sure to get all the shots.
 - Use a condom every time you have vaginal or anal intercourse.

Other resources

For more health information, check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*, listen to the Kaiser Permanente Health-phone at 1-800-33-ASK ME, visit our Web site at www.kp.org, or contact your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources. For medical advice, please consult your physician or other medical professional.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.