



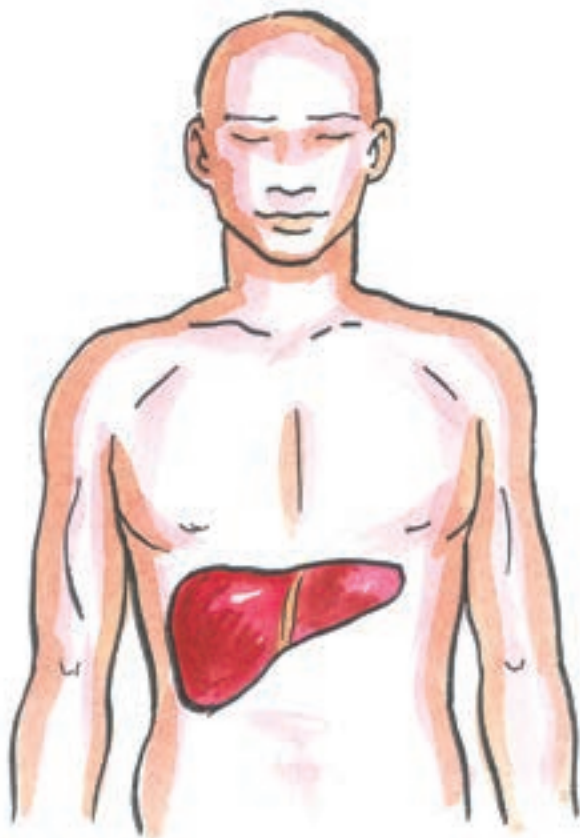
Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**
Public and Aboriginal Health Division

All about hepatitis



Your liver

- Your liver keeps you strong and healthy.
- It does lots of jobs including cleaning your blood of poisons.
- It is found under your rib cage.



What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by many things, including alcohol, drugs, chemicals and some viruses.



Once it is badly damaged, you can't fix your liver, and you can even die.



This booklet is just about hepatitis that you get from viruses.

How can I tell if I've got hepatitis?

If you've got hepatitis the signs can include:

- feeling really tired and sleepy for a really long time
- skin and white of eyes turning yellow
- dark, tea coloured pee
- light coloured faeces (poo, cooma, goona, shit)
- not feeling hungry or eating less
- feeling sick.

Many people have no signs of sickness at all.

The only way to check for hepatitis is to see your clinic or doctor and have a blood test.



Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is caused by the hepatitis A virus.

Hepatitis A virus is found in the faeces (poo) of people with the virus. You can get it if you get a tiny bit of virus in your mouth. This could be from something that has been touched by an infected person, or something with tiny amounts of faeces on it, including your hands, water or food.



How do you get hepatitis A?

You can get hepatitis A:

- by not washing and cleaning your hands really well with soap (or just water if there is no soap):
 - after going to the toilet
 - after touching anything that could be dirty like nappies, used condoms, bedding or towels
- from food, plates, spoons, forks or knives handled by a person with it
- from cups, glasses, bottles or cans shared with a person with it
- sharing cigarettes, bongs, joints or pipes or syringes, needles, tourniquets or spoons handled by a person with it
- licking or kissing near the bum of a person with it
- from dirty water.



How do I stop hepatitis A?

- Get immunised! See your clinic or doctor.
- Always wash your hands (use soap and rub hands together really well):
 - after going to toilet
 - after changing nappies
 - after sex
 - after handling anything dirty from faeces
 - before and after handling food, cups, plates and cutlery
 - before and after injecting, tattooing or piercing.
- **Use a condom and/or dam and lube every time you have sex.**
- **Never share injecting or smoking equipment.**



What if I have hepatitis A?

If you think you may have hepatitis A, you should see your clinic or doctor.

Most people who get hepatitis A get better by themselves without any treatment. To get better quicker drink lots of water, rest, eat healthy food (not fatty) and stay away from grog and other drugs.

Hepatitis A can damage your liver. But if you can take care of yourself, you can get better, and you can't get it again.



Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is caused by the hepatitis B virus.

Hepatitis B virus is found in the blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk of infected people. You can get it when you have sex or if even a tiny bit of blood from an infected person gets into your blood.

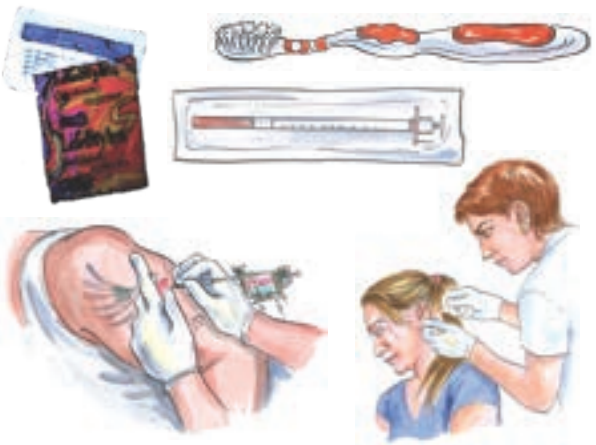
How do you get hepatitis B?

- A baby can get hepatitis B in the womb or during birth if their mother has it.
- You can get hepatitis B by sharing needles or other injecting equipment with a person who has hepatitis B.
- You can get hepatitis B by having sex without a condom and/or dam and lube with a person who has hepatitis B.



How do I stop hepatitis B?

- Get immunised! You can get immunised against hepatitis B by having three immunisations over six months. You need to have all three immunisations or you might not be protected. Most babies and kids are now immunised.
- Use a condom and/or dam and lube every time you have sex.
- Stay with one partner.
- If you inject drugs, use your own needle every time. Never share needles and other injecting equipment, even with friends and family.
- Always use sterile, single use needles for body piercing or tattooing.
- Use your own toothbrush, dental floss and razor.
- Don't let other people's blood get into your blood – cover all cuts and sores.



What if I have hepatitis B?

If you think you may have hepatitis B, you should see your clinic or doctor.

Most adults who get hepatitis B get better over time. You can help by resting, eating healthy (not fatty) food and staying away from grog and other drugs. You should also have regular health checks.

Some people can feel well but keep the virus in their bodies; these people have 'chronic hepatitis B' **and can spread the infection to others**. These people can get really sick after many years. There are medicines that can help – talk to your clinic or doctor.

Most babies who get hepatitis B get really sick. If you are pregnant or trying to have a baby you need to get tested for hepatitis B as early as possible to keep you and your baby healthy. You must also make sure your baby is immunised at birth.

The good news is that:

- you can get immunised
- if you take care of yourself and get rid of it, you can't get it again.



Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is caused by the hepatitis C virus.

When a person has hepatitis C they often feel weak and tired all the time. This can happen straight away or after a long time.

Without treatment, you can get very sick. With treatment, most people will be able to get rid of the virus. But, you can catch hepatitis C more than once, and you can catch different types of hepatitis C. These are known as 'genotypes'.

How do you get hepatitis C?

You can only get hepatitis C if the blood of a person with hepatitis C gets into your blood. You cannot tell if someone has hepatitis C just by looking at them, and often people don't know they have it.

- In Australia, most people get hepatitis C from sharing drug injecting equipment.
- There is a small chance that a mother can pass hepatitis C to her baby in the womb or during delivery.

How do I stop hepatitis C?

- If you inject drugs, use your own needle every time. Never share needles and other injecting equipment, even with friends and family.
- Always use sterile, single use needles for body piercing or tattooing
- Use your own toothbrush, dental floss and razor.
- Don't let other people's blood get into your blood – cover all cuts and sores.
- Use condoms, dams and lube every time you have sex involving blood or damage to the skin, such as anal sex and/or sex with a woman during her period. The chance of getting hepatitis C through penile-vaginal sex at other times is very low.
- If you are pregnant or trying to have a baby, get tested for hepatitis C as early as possible to keep you and your baby healthy.

There is NO immunisation against hepatitis C (only hepatitis A and B).



What if I have hepatitis C?

If you think you may have hepatitis C, you should see your clinic or doctor.

You can help by resting, eating healthy (not fatty) food and staying away from grog and other drugs.

New and better treatments are now available for hepatitis C that only need to be taken for two or three months and can clear the virus in most people. The new treatments have far fewer side effects than the treatments available in the past. Talk with your clinic or doctor.

What if I don't know I've got hepatitis B or C or if I don't get treated?

The virus can stay in your body and make your liver sick, and you can get very sick and even die. You can also spread hepatitis B and hepatitis C to other people without knowing it, even if you feel good.

How to use a condom

- Check date and seal of the packet – old condoms break.



- Open the packet carefully (don't use teeth).



- Roll on when the penis is hard.



- Pinch the tip so air doesn't get trapped as you roll down.

- Put on some water based lube.

- Hold the condom on your penis when you pull out, so semen (cum) doesn't spill out.



- Throw the condom in the bin – not down the toilet.

Where to get help

- Local health clinic or doctor
- HepatitisWA
Hepatitis Helpline: 9328 8538 (metro)
1800 800 070 (country) or
visit www.hepatitiswa.com.au
- Sexual Health Helpline:
9227 6178 (metro)
1800 198 205 (country)
- Peer Based Harm Reduction WA
9325 8387 or visit www.harmreductionwa.org

For more information visit:
www.couldihaveit.com.au
www.healthywa.wa.gov.au
www.hepatitisaustralia.com



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in alternative formats on request for
a person with disability.

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