

What is viral hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver which can be caused by viruses. There are different types of viruses. The most common are Hepatitis A, B, C viruses.

- Vaccination protects against hepatitis A and B!
- Condoms reduce the risk of infection with hepatitis!
- You should be tested for hepatitis B and hepatitis C!

Progression of viral hepatitis

The progression of hepatitis depends on the type of virus and the individual's own immune system. The acute infection is often unnoticed, because it may be asymptomatic or symptoms can be similar to the ones of influenza. If the acute infection does not heal on its own, the virus will continue to increase/develop and one can speak of chronic hepatitis which can constrain the liver function.

- Hepatitis A always heals on its own. Hepatitis A does not reoccur after being infected once.
- Hepatitis B can run both acute and (in 5 – 10% of all cases) chronically. There are treatments for hepatitis B available, some of which are also effective against HIV.
- Left untreated there is an 80% chance for Hepatitis C to move into a long-lasting (chronic) stage. A new possibility of treatment has been introduced in 2014 which can cure patients in a relatively short period of time.

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AIDS HILFE

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Opening hours testing and counseling
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Gefördert aus den Mitteln des Fonds Gesundes Österreich

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HEPATITIS
FACTS & INFOS

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Dangers of viral hepatitis

- The virus can be transmitted unknowingly since the infection remains often unnoticed.
- The liver is an organ that plays an important role in the handling of toxic substances. In a chronic hepatitis liver cells are destroyed by the individual's own immune system and replaced with cells that cannot undertake the task of the liver (= fibrosis).
- In case of cirrhosis of the liver, the liver will continue to shrink and lose its function.
- In the end, one can develop cancer of the liver but it is rarer than cirrhosis.
- The therapy of acute hepatitis C and chronic hepatitis B and C can have strong side effects.

Hepatitis and HIV

A co-infection with HIV and hepatitis B or C (or both) is wide-spread. People being HIV positive can get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B but it depends on the state of the immune system. Therefore please clarify with a physician!

How can I protect myself against hepatitis?

Get vaccinated!

- Vaccines against hepatitis A and hepatitis B are available.
- If there is no immunity due to a previous hepatitis A or B infection it is advisable to get vaccinated.
- You can find out whether immunity exists through a blood test.
- A three-part initial immunization with regular booster can provide lifelong protection.
- There is NO vaccination against hepatitis C. Get tested!
- One can find out through a test whether he or she is infected with hepatitis B or C. At AIDS-Hilfe Vorarlberg you can get tested anonymously.
- The earlier a hepatitis infection is detected, the better: Thereby you can avoid serious health damage and have good preconditions for treatment.

Protect yourself with condoms!

- Use condoms!
- The use of condoms protects against several sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.
- Use condoms for vaginal, anal, and oral sex.
- Even if both partners are tested positive for HIV or hepatitis condoms should always be used in order to prevent other sexually transmitted diseases.

Other protective measures

Hepatitis A:

- Personal hygiene, hygienic handling of food, regular hand washing.
- Avoid eating raw food and drinking unbottled water when traveling to countries with low hygienic standards.

Hepatitis B und C:

- Avoid sharing needles and tubules for snorting.
- When getting pierced or tattooed always make sure that the equipment is for single use only or is sterilized properly.
- Always use protective gloves when in contact with blood (e.g. first aid, fisting, etc.)
- Avert sharing objects which might be contaminated with blood (e.g. tooth brushes, razors, nail scissors, lube, etc.)



	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis C
How can I get infected?	The most common route of transmission of hepatitis A occurs through contaminated water and food (shellfish and seafood, raw fruit and vegetables) and unhygienic circumstances associated with it. A sexual transmission occurs especially in the case of anal sex without condom or oral-anal contact.	You can easily get infected with hepatitis B through sex (blood, sperm, saliva, vaginal secretion). Also, the virus can be transmitted during pregnancy and birth from the mother to the child. Moreover, one can get infected through blood during tattooing and piercing or common use of toothbrush and shaving kit, as well as intravenous drug use or redistribution of tubes for snorting.	Hepatitis C is communicated through blood and blood products. The virus can be transmitted during pregnancy and birth from the mother to the child. In particular, one can get infected through blood during tattooing and piercing or common use of toothbrush and shaving kit, as well as intravenous drug use or redistribution of tubes for snorting. A sexual transmission with Hepatitis C is very rare.
Who are vulnerable groups?	People traveling to countries with hot weather conditions with low standards of hygiene. Prisoners, prison staff, residents living in closed quarters (tight room, poor hygienic conditions). Health and nursing staff.	People that frequently change sexual partner. Intravenous drug users. Prisoners, prison staff, residents living in closed quarters (tight room, poor hygienic conditions). Health and nursing staff.	Intravenous drug users. People who frequently change sexual partners.
Incubation period	10 – 40 days	1 – 6 months	0,5 – 6 months
Symptoms of acute infection	Flu-like symptoms: nausea, fatigue, headaches, pain under the right side of the ribs, moderate fever. In 1/3 of the cases the skin turns yellow, the urine brown and the stool pale.	In 2/3 of cases the acute infection is unnoticed. Otherwise, the symptoms resemble those of hepatitis A.	The acute infection remains usually unnoticed.
Treatment of the acute disease	There is no known effective treatment of the symptoms	There is no known effective treatment of the symptoms	Medical therapy for about 6 months
Chronic course of disease	----	5 – 10 %	50 – 80 %
Treatment of the chronic disease	----	Life long therapy since there is no cure	Therapy can take up to months or even years. There is no guarantee for a cure.
Possible long term consequences	No	Cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure, liver cancer	Cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure, liver cancer
Life long immunity after recovery?	Yes	Yes	No