

GETTING TO KNOW...

**HIV and
HEPATITIS**



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... HIV AND HEPATITIS

Hepatitis is a disease of the liver. It causes the liver to become inflamed, affecting its function. Hepatitis can be caused by many factors such as alcohol or drug use and autoimmune diseases, but they're most commonly caused through **infection with the hepatitis virus**.

There are five different viruses that cause hepatitis, and each of them have different methods of transmission:

- The Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) and Hepatitis E Virus (HEV) is transmitted orally, through consumption of food and drink that has been contaminated with the virus.
- The Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and Hepatitis D Virus (HDV) are transmitted through body fluids such as blood and semen. They can be transmitted through unprotected sex, sharing drug use equipment such as syringes and needles, and contaminated tattoo or piercing instruments.

Many people don't get symptoms after getting infected with the hepatitis virus. But if you do, here is what you may experience:

- Fever;
- Tiredness;
- Loss of appetite;
- Nausea;
- Vomiting;
- Abdominal pain;
- Dark urine;
- Clay-coloured stools;
- Joint pain;
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).

A viral hepatitis infection often lasts a few weeks to 3 months, but can go up to 6 months. Rarely, some infected people develop a serious illness that can result in liver failure or death. If your body cannot clear the virus on its own, it can become a long-term infection that gradually damages your liver.

WHAT IF I HAVE HIV?

People living with HIV are more affected by viral hepatitis compared to people who don't have HIV, and those who have both HIV and viral hepatitis have an increased risk of developing serious complications such as liver disease and failure.

Being on highly-active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) is important in bringing your immune system back to a healthy state. A strong, functioning immune system reduces the risk of developing chronic hepatitis.

If you're living with HIV, the best way to prevent viral hepatitis infection is to get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B, and to test for hepatitis C as part of your HIV care. It reduces the risk of the virus quietly affecting your body, and ensures that you get immediate medical treatment when you need to. If you haven't done this, discuss it with your doctor.

If you have any concerns about hepatitis, it's best to discuss them with your doctor or healthcare provider – they will be able to determine the action that's best for your situation.

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