

HEPATITIS

A SILENT GLOBAL HEALTH THREAT

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is a medical condition characterized by **inflammation of the liver**, often caused by a **viral infection**, though other triggers include **alcohol abuse, toxins, medications, and autoimmune disorders**.

The liver plays a crucial role in filtering blood, detoxifying chemicals, and metabolizing drugs. When inflamed, its functionality can be severely compromised, potentially leading to **chronic liver disease, cirrhosis, or even liver cancer**.

TYPES OF HEPATITIS

There are five main types of viral hepatitis, each caused by a different virus:

Type	Transmission	Prevention	Prognosis
Hepatitis A (HAV)	Fecal-oral route, often through contaminated food or water.	Vaccination, safe food practices.	Usually acute; rarely leads to long-term liver damage.
Hepatitis B (HBV)	Blood, semen, or other bodily fluids (e.g., unprotected sex, shared needles).	Vaccination, safe sex, screening blood products.	Can become chronic, increasing risk of liver cirrhosis or cancer.
Hepatitis C (HCV)	Blood-to-blood contact, primarily via needle sharing.	No vaccine; avoid high-risk behaviors.	High rate of chronic infection, but curable with modern antiviral treatments.
Hepatitis D (HDV)	Blood; only occurs in those already infected with HBV.	HBV vaccination prevents HDV.	Can lead to more severe outcomes than HBV alone.
Hepatitis E (HEV)	Contaminated water, especially in areas with poor sanitation.	Improved hygiene, clean water.	Typically self-limiting; can be serious in pregnant women.

Global Impact

According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**:

- Over 300 million people are living with chronic Hepatitis B or C.
- Hepatitis causes over **1.1 million deaths** annually.
- Most infected individuals are **unaware** of their condition until it's too late.

Symptoms to Watch

Often called the "**silent epidemic**," hepatitis can go unnoticed for years. When symptoms do appear, they may include:

- Fatigue
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin/eyes)
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Diagnosis & Treatment

Diagnosis:

- Blood tests (to detect the virus and liver enzyme levels)
- Liver biopsy or ultrasound in severe cases

Treatment:

Hepatitis A & E: Usually resolve without treatment.

Hepatitis B: Antiviral medications can manage chronic cases.

Hepatitis C: Direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) can cure >95% of cases.

Hepatitis D: Interferon therapy (limited efficacy).

Prevention is Key

Vaccination: Available for Hepatitis A and B.

Hygiene: Proper handwashing and clean water sources.

Safe practices: Avoid sharing needles, practice safe sex, screen blood donations.



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