

What are the treatment options?

Some types and cases of hepatitis can heal without intervention, but sometimes it can progress to scarring of the liver, or cirrhosis—a late stage of scarring (fibrosis) of the liver .

Hepatitis A

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. The doctor will advise the patient to abstain from alcohol and drugs during the recovery. Most patients with hepatitis A will recover without intervention.

Hepatitis B

A patient with hepatitis B needs to rest and abstain completely from alcohol. The doctor may prescribe an antiviral agent called interferon, or other antiviral suppressive therapies.

Hepatitis C

A patient with hepatitis C will be prescribed antiviral agents, with or without ribavirin.

Some directed antivirals and combination therapies are now available to treat the hepatitis C virus based on its subtype. These treatments target viral replication and prevent the virus from being able to reproduce. When taken correctly, the cure rate is very high.

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Hepatitis



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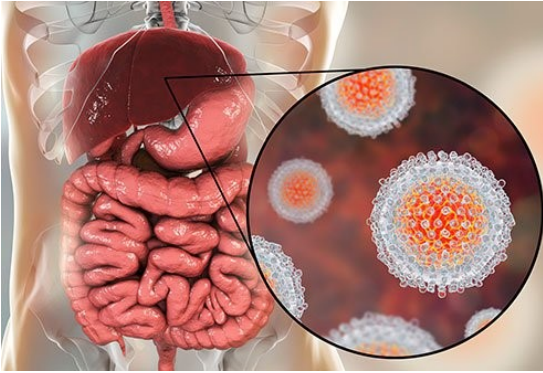
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St. Maarten Medical Center

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis refers to inflammation of the liver. Inflammation is a tissue's reaction to irritation or injury. It generally results in pain, redness, and swelling.



Several viruses are known to cause hepatitis. Common forms of viral hepatitis include:

Hepatitis A: This form of hepatitis does not lead to a chronic infection and usually has no complications. The liver usually heals from hepatitis A within 2 months. However, occasional deaths from hepatitis A have occurred due to liver failure. Hepatitis A can be prevented by vaccination.

Hepatitis B: More than 70% of all cases of hepatitis B affect young people between the ages of 15 and 39. Most people recover from the virus within 6 months. However, a few cases cause a life-long, chronic infection. Chronic hepatitis causes ongoing damage to the liver. The earlier in life hepatitis B is contracted, the more likely it is to become chronic. People can carry the virus without feeling sick. These people can still spread the virus. Hepatitis B can be prevented by getting

a vaccine.

Hepatitis C: At least 80% of patients with hepatitis C develop a chronic liver infection. It often does not show any symptoms. No vaccine is yet available to prevent hepatitis C.

Most people recover from hepatitis, and the disease is often preventable. However, it is still considered a serious health risk because it can:

- Destroy liver tissue.
- Spread easily from person to person.
- Weaken the body's immune system.
- Cause the liver to fail.
- Cause liver cancer.
- Cause death.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis?

The most common symptoms of hepatitis include:

- Dark urine (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Stomach pain (hepatitis B, C)
- Yellow skin or eye whites, called jaundice (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Pale or clay-colored stool (hepatitis A, C)
- Low-grade fever (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Loss of appetite (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Fatigue (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Feeling sick to your stomach (hepatitis A, B, C)
- Aching joints (hepatitis B, C)

Contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you have any or a combination of these symptoms.

How does someone get or spread hepatitis?

A person can get **hepatitis A** from eating food or drinking water carrying the virus.

A person can get **hepatitis B** in many ways, including:

- Having sex with an infected person.
- Sharing dirty needles.
- Being in direct contact with infected blood.
- Getting needle stick injuries.
- Being transferred from mother to unborn child.
- Being in contact with an infected person's body fluids.

An infected mother has a high chance of giving hepatitis B to her child during or after birth. All pregnant women should be tested for hepatitis B. Within 12 hours of birth, infants born to mothers with hepatitis B need to receive treatment with hepatitis B antibody and hepatitis B vaccine. This can prevent transmission of hepatitis B from mother to the baby.

A person can get **hepatitis C** from:

- Sharing dirty needles.
- Being in direct contact with infected blood.
- Getting needle stick injuries.
- Having sex with an infected person (less common).