



NEWS

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Hepatitis Awareness

Norristown, PA (June 4, 2014) – Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. There are multiple causes of Hepatitis, but the most common types of Hepatitis are caused by viruses. The most common types of viral Hepatitis include Hepatitis A, B, and C.

It is estimated that 4.4 million people in the United States have chronic Hepatitis. People may be infected with viral Hepatitis and remain asymptomatic. For individuals who do have symptoms, viral Hepatitis can range in severity from mild to serious. Individuals who think they are at risk for contracting the virus should talk to their healthcare provider about getting tested. It is important to know the signs and symptoms of Hepatitis.

Symptoms of Hepatitis may include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Abdominal discomfort
- Dark-colored urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes)

Hepatitis A is caused by the Hepatitis A virus. It is primarily spread when a person ingests food or water that is contaminated with the feces of an infected person. The Hepatitis A virus does not cause chronic liver disease. No specific treatment is available for Hepatitis A and recovery times can range from several weeks to months. Symptom management includes rest, adequate nutrition, and fluid replacement. The Hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to prevent the disease. Frequent hand washing, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing food, can also help prevent the spread of Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B infection is caused by the Hepatitis B virus. It can cause an acute or a chronic infection. Acute infection occurs within the first six months after exposure to the Hepatitis B virus and can lead to chronic infection. Chronic infection occurs when the Hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body and is long-term. The Hepatitis B virus is transmitted when blood, semen, or other bodily fluids containing the virus enter the body of an uninfected person. The virus can be spread from an infected mother to a baby during childbirth. Treatment recommendations for acute Hepatitis B include rest, adequate nutrition, and plenty of fluids. There are several medications approved for the treatment of chronic Hepatitis B, but not every person will need medication. An individual with chronic Hepatitis B should be monitored by a doctor. It is recommended that all infants get the Hepatitis B vaccine at birth. Individuals at increased risk for contracting the disease are also encouraged to get vaccinated.

Hepatitis C is caused by the Hepatitis C virus. Hepatitis C infection can be acute or chronic. Acute infection occurs within the first six months after exposure to the Hepatitis C virus and usually leads to chronic infection. Chronic infection occurs when the Hepatitis C virus remains in a person's body and is long-term. Hepatitis C is spread through infected blood, sharing needles, having sex with an infected person, and from an infected mother to a baby during childbirth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending that people born between 1946 and 1965 get tested for Hepatitis C. There is currently no vaccine available for Hepatitis C, but treatment options have become better and more accessible in recent years. Individuals who have Hepatitis C should consult with their health provider concerning appropriate care and treatment.

Here are some additional resources to take action against the most common types of Hepatitis:

- For further information, please visit the CDC webpage on Viral Hepatitis: <http://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/index.htm>.
- Identify organizations offering Hepatitis testing and additional services including vaccines and treatment in the National Prevention Information Network [NPIN Organizations Database](#).
- Determine if you are at risk. Find out with the CDC's [assessment tool](#).