

# Hepatitis

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that can be caused by viruses, drugs, and chemicals, including alcohol. Clinically, several types of viral hepatitis are recognized

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Hepatitis A (infectious hepatitis) is caused by the hepatitis A virus and is spread via fecal contamination of objects such as food, clothing, toys, and eating utensils (fecal–oral route). It is generally a mild disease of children and young adults characterized by loss of appetite, malaise, nausea, diarrhea, fever, and chills. Eventually, jaundice appears. This type of hepatitis does not cause lasting liver damage.

Most people recover in 4 to 6 weeks.

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Hepatitis B is caused by the hepatitis B virus and is spread primarily by sexual contact and contaminated syringes and transfusion equipment. It can also be spread via saliva and tears. Hepatitis B virus can be present for years or even a lifetime, and it can produce cirrhosis and possibly cancer of the liver. Individuals who harbor the active hepatitis B virus also become carriers. Vaccines produced through recombinant DNA technology (for example, Recombivax HB ® ) are available to prevent hepatitis B infection.

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Hepatitis C, caused by the hepatitis C virus, is clinically similar to hepatitis B. Hepatitis C can cause cirrhosis and possibly liver cancer. In developed nations, donated blood is screened for the presence of hepatitis B and C.

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Hepatitis D is caused by the hepatitis D virus. It is transmitted like hepatitis B, and in fact a person must have been co-infected with hepatitis B before contracting hepatitis D. Hepatitis D results in severe liver damage and has a higher fatality rate than infection with hepatitis B virus alone.

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Hepatitis E is caused by the hepatitis E virus and is spread like hepatitis A. Although it does not cause chronic liver disease, hepatitis E virus has a very high mortality rate among pregnant women.