

Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

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Section, Forsyth County Department of Public Health



The ABCs of Hepatitis

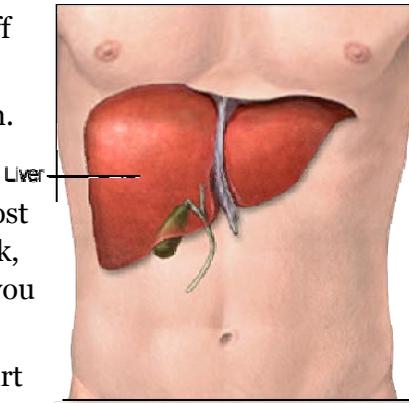
What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the liver. The most common types are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. Viral Hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer.

Why is your liver important?

The liver performs over 500 functions that keep the body healthy! The liver:

- Plays a role in processing food, sugar, and fat.
- Helps your body fight off illness and disease.
- Stores vitamins and iron.
- Helps the blood to clot.
- Filters and purifies almost everything you eat, drink, breathe and even what you get on your skin.



The liver is an amazing part of your body because it can even regrow its own tissue!

What can hurt your liver?

- Viruses such as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C
- Excessive consumption of alcohol
- Toxic fumes and liquids
- Certain drugs (including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, herbal supplements, and vitamins)

When the liver is damaged it can become scarred. Over time, the liver may become so scarred that blood is unable to flow through it which causes serious damage to the liver and to a person's overall health.

How can you keep your liver healthy?

- See your doctor for regular check-ups
- Talk to your doctor about any drugs, supplements or vitamins you are taking
- Talk to your doctor about the Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccines
- Stay away from toxic fumes or liquids
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis or other liver disease?

The most common symptoms are mild to severe fatigue, headaches, fever, and feeling sick to your stomach. However, most people have no symptoms! Even if the liver is damaged, you may not know it!

What are the most common types of Hepatitis?

Hepatitis A

Caused by the Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) and passed from person to person in human feces

Hepatitis B

Caused by the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and passed from person to person in blood, semen, or vaginal secretions

Hepatitis C

Caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and passed from person to person in blood

How can you get Hepatitis?

Hepatitis A

- You eat food prepared by someone who has the virus and didn't wash hands after using the toilet
- You eat from dishes touched by someone who has the virus and didn't wash hands after using the toilet
- You drink water or eat food that has the virus in it

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C

- You have vaginal or anal sex with someone who has the virus (less common with Hepatitis C)
- You share any type of needles with someone who has the virus (piercing, tattoo, etc)
- You are a pregnant female with the virus and pass it to your baby at birth (less common with Hepatitis C)
- You come in contact with someone's blood which is infected with the virus

How can you protect yourself from Hepatitis?

- Talk to your doctor about the Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccines
- Practice good hand-washing and hygiene
- Use latex condoms if you have sex
- Don't share personal care items that may have blood on them (toothbrushes, razors, nail files, etc)
- Don't share needles for injecting drugs, tattooing, piercing or any other reason

For more information:

American Liver Foundation: www.liverfoundation.org
HCV Advocate: www.hcvadvocate.org
Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/hepatitis