



## What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is a liver disease that makes your liver swell and stop working well. It can be mild and last for a short time or be very serious and cause liver failure and death.

How does a healthy liver work? It helps your body fight infections, stops bleeding, takes drugs and other poisons out of your blood, and stores energy.

What causes hepatitis? It's caused by viruses, bacteria, alcohol or drug abuse, some medicines, or serious harm to the liver. Hepatitis affects millions of people in the U.S. It's also a serious health problem in parts of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

What are the different kinds of hepatitis? There are five: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, hepatitis D, and hepatitis E.

### How Do People Get It?

People get hepatitis A by eating food and drinking water infected with hepatitis.

People get hepatitis B by having unprotected sex with someone who has hepatitis B; sharing needles with someone infected with hepatitis B; being accidentally stuck by an infected needle; or a mother passing the virus to her child during childbirth.

People get hepatitis C from getting blood that's infected with the virus; sharing needles with someone infected with the virus; being accidentally stuck by an infected needle; or using tools for tattoos and body piercing that are infected with the virus. People also get hepatitis C by having unprotected sex and by a mother passing the virus to her child during childbirth.

People can get hepatitis D only if they already have hepatitis B. People with hepatitis B can get hepatitis D by sharing needles with someone infected with the virus; being accidentally stuck by an infected needle; or having unprotected sex with someone who is infected with the hepatitis D virus.

People get hepatitis E by drinking water infected with the virus. This type of hepatitis doesn't often occur in the U.S.

It's important to note that blood banks now check to make sure that no hepatitis B or C is in the blood they give to hospitals and clinics.

### What are the Signs?

Some people with hepatitis have no signs of the disease. For others, the most common early signs of hepatitis are a mild fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Later signs of hepatitis are dark-colored urine and pale bowel movements, pain in the stomach, and the skin and whites of the eyes turning yellow (jaundice). Other serious signs of hepatitis can include short-term arthritis-like problems and personality changes.

How can I take care of myself if I have hepatitis? Doctors suggest bed rest, eating healthy foods, and not drinking alcohol or taking certain medications as the best ways to take care of yourself when you have hepatitis.

How can I lower my chances of getting hepatitis? The best way is to stay away from the blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or saliva of people with hepatitis. Ask your doctor if it makes sense for you to get a vaccine to keep you from getting hepatitis B. Also, if you are traveling to a country with known hepatitis problems, check into getting a vaccination. Doctors now suggest that all babies born in the U.S. get the hepatitis B vaccine.

I have hepatitis – how can I keep from giving it to other people? Don't share toothbrushes or razors. Use condoms when you have sex. If you use needles to take illegal drugs, do not share them.

Find out more about hepatitis by contacting the National Women's Health Information Center at 1-800-994-9662 or the following organizations:

National Center for Infectious Diseases: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/index.htm>

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases: <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>

American Liver Foundation: 1-800-465-4837  
<http://www.liverfoundation.org/>

Hepatitis Foundation International: 1-800-891-0707  
<http://www.hepfi.org/>

## Connecting Breast Milk and Diabetes

Babies who are breastfed have a lower risk of developing diabetes and obesity. Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body misuses insulin, a hormone. The body's misuse of insulin alters the use/storage of carbohydrates and fats.

### Breast Milk vs. Formula

- Breast milk has the perfect content of fat and protein.
- Formula is too high in fat and protein.
- Breast milk is easy to digest and metabolize.
- Formula is difficult to digest, increases insulin levels, and helps store fats.
- Mothers' breasts regulate the amount and type of breast milk – foremilk is a strong and watery flow, hindmilk is slow and rich in fat.
- Breast milk has 400 nutrients that science is far from understanding.
- Breast milk also carries antibodies – protection from disease.
- The act of nursing stimulates areas of the brain related to hunger and satisfaction. With formula feeding,

the focus is on emptying the bottle, not natural hunger satisfaction cues.

### Causes of Diabetes

Different theories exist about the cause of diabetes:

1. A slow-growing virus invades beta cells in the pancreas, where insulin is made. Breast milk has antibodies that protect beta cells from destruction.
2. With formula-fed infants, insulin levels remain high for a longer period of time than in breast-fed infants. This may exhaust beta cells.
3. There's a protein in formula (bovine serum albumin or BSA) that babies cannot digest. When BSA leaves the gut, the body doesn't recognize the protein and makes antibodies against it. These antibodies also attack beta cells because they're so similar to BSA.

Because we've become so separate from our instincts, science now must prove to all of us the value of breastfeeding.

### Moms and Babies Breastfeeding Circle

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, 6 - 7:30 p.m., Housing Department Conf. Room

## Tooth Talk

by Linda Kreutzer, RDH

### Is it Risky to Visit the Dentist?

Some people have concerns about catching a disease at the dentist office.

The truth is, it's very unlikely that a disease can be passed while someone is having dental work done. Today's modern dental office staff is extremely aware of germs and how to keep from passing them from one patient to the next.

All dental instruments are processed according to strict standards. They're pre-cleaned in a special solution before being bagged and placed in an autoclave. This is a pressure oven, reaching high temperatures and pressure that kills all bacteria, viruses, and spores.

All metal instruments and drills are sterilized after each use. Many disposable products are used for each patient, including bib, cup, plastic suction tips, and polishers used at cleaning appointments, and paper and cotton products.

All dental clinics use a hospital-strength cleanser to wipe countertops, light handles, and other surfaces touched by the staff during a procedure. It kills all viruses (including AIDS and hepatitis).

Take a look at the people working in a dental office and at the people in back who work in people's mouths. They have on masks, safety glasses or goggles, and gloves.

The gloves get changed in between every patient. Sometimes the gloves are changed during a dental visit. Protective gear is used to protect the dental staff as well as the health of the patients.

If you have questions about how things are cleaned or sterilized, ask at your next dental visit. The staff is concerned about patient safety and tries hard to make your visit a positive one, not a risky one. We work hard to earn your trust.