

Factsheet: Heps A, B and C



For more information about anything in this factsheet, phone the *Hepatitis Infoline* on 1800 803 990 or go to www.hep.org.au

	Hep A	Hep B	Hep C
What is it?	Is a liver infection (caused by hep A virus) that makes people sick but only for 1-3 weeks.	Is a liver infection (caused by hep B virus). Most adults who get hep B clear their infection. Most children who get hep B develop hep B for life and are at risk of liver disease later in life.	Is an easily-cured liver infection (caused by hep C virus).
Window period (the time between infection and the illness showing up in blood tests)	It takes 2-4 weeks after getting the virus before it shows up in blood tests (but tests are usually not done due to the short nature of illness).	It takes 4-6 weeks (HBsAg test).	For adults it takes 2 weeks after getting the virus before it shows up in blood tests (PCR test). For babies, it takes 8 weeks (PCR test).
Transmitted by	Food or water contaminated with sewerage / anything with human poo on it that comes in contact with the mouth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mother to baby - Blood or other body fluids of someone with hep B getting into another person's bloodstream - Sexual contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blood of someone with hep C getting into another person's bloodstream - Mother to baby.
Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling unwell, aches and pains, fever, nausea, lack of appetite, abdominal pain, dark urine - Followed by jaundice (yellowing of eyes and sometimes skin) - Young children usually have no symptoms. 	Often no symptoms, but if they do appear, they include jaundice (see above), dark urine, fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, and joint pain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often no symptoms, but if they do appear, they are like having a mild flu - a small number of people may have hep B-like symptoms (see left).

<p>Treatment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rest and keeping up fluids, but no treatment needed - Some people use complementary therapies to manage their symptoms but care must be taken as some therapies may cause liver damage (e.g. herbals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good treatments are available for all adults who hold Medicare cards - Treatment aims to prevent liver damage but is not an actual cure - Not everyone will need treatment and there are short- or long-term options. Phone the <i>Hepatitis Infoline</i> for more information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very good treatments are available for everyone in Australia who has hep C* - Speak to your doctor, nurse or specialist about starting hep C treatment. Phone the <i>Hepatitis Infoline</i> for more information. *Cures are available to people who have a Medicare Card or Health Care Concession Card and who aren't hospital inpatients.
<p>Vaccine</p>	<p>Yes, there is a vaccine and it is safe and effective.</p>	<p>Yes, the hep B vaccine is safe and effective, and is part of Australia's national immunisation program.</p>	<p>No, there is no vaccine but scientists are trying hard to develop one.</p>
<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get vaccinated. - Household contacts and sexual partners of someone with hep A should be given immuno-globulin (a drug that gives short-term protection). - Wash hands after going to the toilet and before eating. - Practice safer sex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get vaccinated. - Newborn babies should be given an injection of immunoglobulin within 12 hours of birth. - Don't share fits or other equipment when injecting drugs. - Avoid blood-to-blood contact. - Practice safer sex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not share fits or other equipment when injecting drugs. - Avoid other blood-to-blood contact. - Avoid backyard tattooists and piercers – use shops that follow proper sterile procedures. - Avoid needle stick injuries.

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This factsheet was developed by Hepatitis NSW. It was reviewed by the Hepatitis NSW Medical and Research Advisory Panel.

Last updated April 2026