



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Hepatitis D

What is hepatitis D?

Hepatitis D, also known as delta hepatitis, is a serious disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis D virus (HDV). It is uncommon in the United States. You must already be infected with the hepatitis B virus to become infected with hepatitis D (see Hepatitis B Quick Facts). You may recover from an acute case of hepatitis D, or you may develop chronic hepatitis D. Chronic hepatitis D can lead to liver failure or cirrhosis.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis D?

Symptoms may include:

- Yellowing of the eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Tiredness
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Joint pain
- Fever

How is hepatitis D spread?

Hepatitis D can only occur when someone is also infected with hepatitis B. The hepatitis B virus is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid that is infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. Even though many people do not know they are infected, they can still spread the virus to others. Examples of ways that people can be infected include:

- Having sex with an infected partner and not using a condom
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment

- Sharing items such as razors, toothbrushes or nail clippers with an infected person
- Being born to a mother who has hepatitis B
- Getting a tattoo or piercing with equipment that isn't sterile
- Coming in contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person

Hepatitis D is not spread through food or water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, coughing or sneezing.

Who is at risk for getting hepatitis D?

Your risk for getting hepatitis D is higher if you:

- Have hepatitis B
- Are an injection drug user
- Have unprotected sex with an infected person
- Have a weakened immune system
- Are a hemodialysis patient
- Are a health care or public safety worker
- Were born to an infected mother
- Immigrated from southern Italy, eastern Europe, South America, Africa, or the Middle East

How do I know if I have hepatitis D?

Blood tests need to be done to find out if you are infected with hepatitis D. See your doctor to talk about being tested.

How is hepatitis D treated?

There is no approved treatment for hepatitis D infections. Because the infection causes serious liver damage, supportive care and a liver transplant is the treatment for people infected with this disease. See your doctor.

How is hepatitis D prevented?

There is no vaccine for hepatitis D, but the hepatitis B virus vaccination is effective against the hepatitis D virus. See your doctor for more information on the hepatitis B vaccine. Be sure that anyone living in your home receives the hepatitis B vaccination.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm> and http://www.hepb.org/hepb/hepatitis_D.htm

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