



Hepatitis B, C, HIV/AIDS

What are Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS?

Hepatitis B and C and HIV are blood-borne viruses that are not infectious through casual contact, such as hugging or shaking hands.

Hepatitis B and C- "Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver and also refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver (infection with the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C virus (HCV)).

HIV/AIDS- HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS. Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV.

How are Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS spread?

Transmission of Hepatitis B, C and HIV usually occurs when blood, semen, or another body fluid from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected.

What is the incubation period for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS?

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C can begin as a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed (acute infection), but in some people, the virus remains in the body, potentially resulting in long-term liver problems (chronic infection).

For HIV, the incubation period can vary from person to person, depending on how fast the body builds up

antibodies to HIV. The antibodies will appear on a blood test within three months for 97 percent of infected people. In rare cases, the incubation period for HIV may be as long as six months.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS?

The only way to know if you are infected with HIV is to be tested. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether you have HIV. Many people who are infected with HIV **do not have any symptoms at all** for 10 years or more. Some people who are infected with HIV report having flu-like symptoms (often described as "the worst flu ever") 2 to 4 weeks after exposure. Symptoms can include: fever, enlarged lymph nodes, sore throat, and rash.

Symptoms of acute Hepatitis B, if they appear, can include: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, and, jaundice (yellow color in the skin or the eyes).

Should a person with Hepatitis B, C or HIV/AIDS be isolated?

No. However, precautions must be taken when at risk of coming into contact with the body fluids of infected persons (eg. Condom/ barrier method use, gloves, proper needle handling, etc.).

What type of treatment and care should be given for those infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS?

Hepatitis C- If acute hepatitis C is diagnosed, treatment does reduce the risk that acute hepatitis C will become a chronic infection. Acute hepatitis C

is treated with the same medications used to treat chronic Hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B- There is no medication available to treat acute Hepatitis B and those with chronic Hepatitis B virus infection should seek the care or consultation of a doctor with experience treating Hepatitis B. People with chronic Hepatitis B should be monitored regularly for signs of liver disease and evaluated for possible treatment.

HIV/AIDS- There is no cure for HIV/AIDS. Antiretroviral therapy (ART), can dramatically prolong the lives of many people infected with HIV and lower their chance of infecting others. It is important that people get tested for HIV and know that they are infected early so that medical care and treatment have the greatest effect.

Are there vaccinations available against these diseases?

There is a vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B; however, **there are none for Hepatitis C or HIV**. If you or your child has not been vaccinated against Hepatitis B, contact your physician or visit the Child Health Immunization Clinic located at the Hamilton Health Centre, 67 Victoria Street, Hamilton, to be immunized as soon as possible.

Adapted from:

“Viral Hepatitis.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009 (<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/>, accessed 5 May 2014)

“HIV/AIDS.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009 (<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/>, accessed 5 May 2014)