



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**
Public Health and Clinical Services

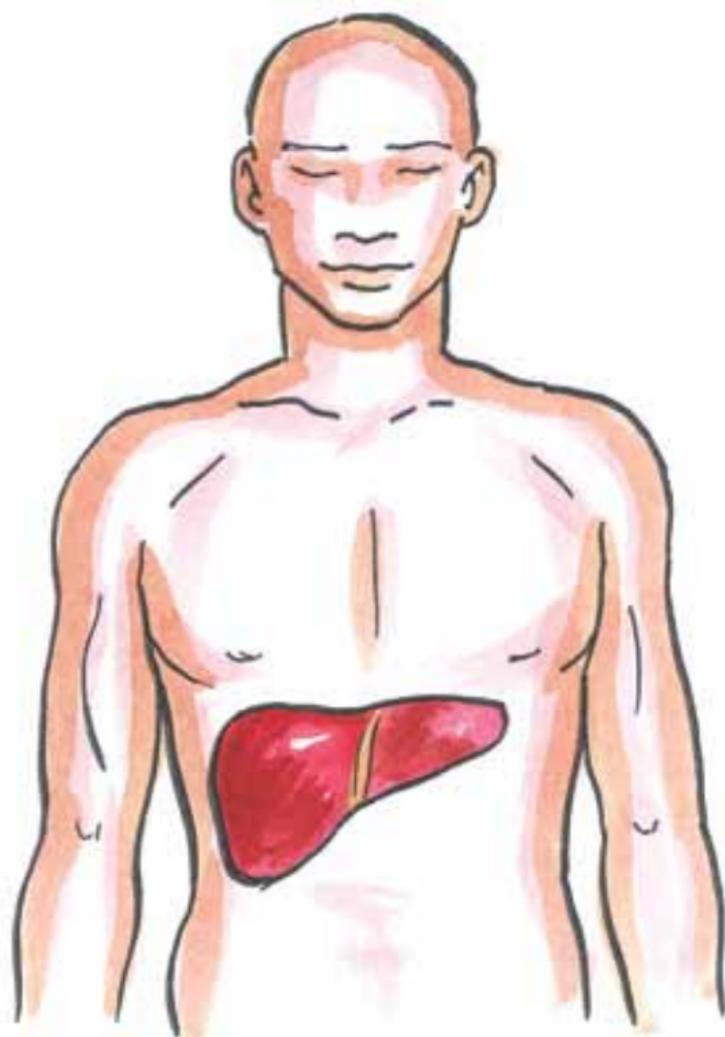
All about hepatitis



Delivering a **Healthy WA**

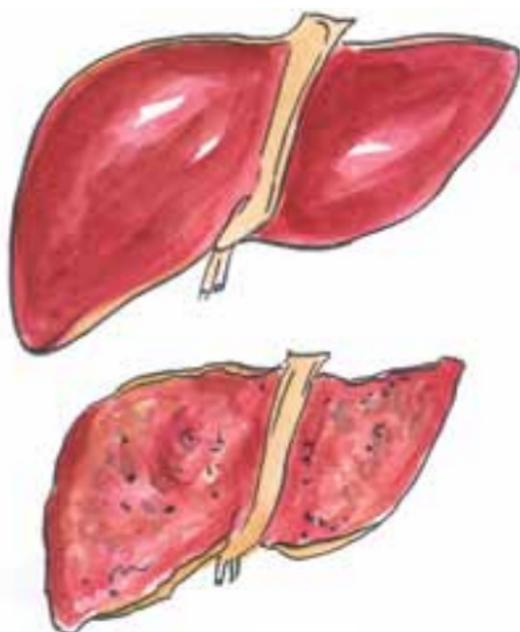
Your liver

- Your liver keeps you strong and healthy.
- It does lots of jobs including cleaning your blood of poisons.
- It is found under your rib cage.



What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by many things, including grog, drugs, chemicals and some viruses.



Once it is badly damaged, you can't fix your liver, and you can even die.



This booklet only looks at hepatitis from viruses.

How can I tell?

If you've got hepatitis the signs can include:

- feeling really tired and sleepy for a really long time.
- skin and white of eyes turn yellow.
- dark, tea coloured pee
- light coloured faeces (poo, cooma, goona, shit)
- not feeling hungry or eating less
- feeling sick.

Many people have no signs of sickness at all.

The best and only way to check for hepatitis is to see your clinic or doctor and have a blood test.



Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is caused by the hepatitis A virus.

How can you catch it?

Hepatitis A Virus is found in the faeces (poo) of people with the virus. You can catch it by getting a tiny bit of virus in your mouth. This could be from something touched by an infected person, or something with tiny amounts of faeces on it, including your hands, water or food.



You can catch hepatitis A

- By not washing and cleaning your hands really well with soap (or just water if there is no soap):
 - after going to the toilet
 - after touching anything that could be dirty like nappies, used condoms, bedding or towels.
- From food, plates, spoons, forks or knives handled by a person with it.
- From cups, glasses, bottles or cans shared with a person with it.
- Sharing cigarettes, bongos, joints or pipes or syringes, needles, tourniquets or spoons handled by a person with it.
- Licking or kissing near the bum of a person with it.
- From dirty water.



How do I stop Hepatitis A?

- Get immunised! See your clinic or doctor
- Always wash your hands (use soap and rub hands together really well):
 - After going to toilet
 - After changing nappies
 - After sex
 - After handling anything dirty from faeces
 - Before and after handling food, cups, plates and cutlery
 - Before and after injecting, tattooing or piercing
- **Always use a condom and/or dam and lubricant when you have sex**
- **Never share injecting or smoking equipment.**



What if I have it?

If you think you have hepatitis A, you should see your clinic or doctor.

Most people who get hepatitis A get better by themselves without any treatment. To get better quicker drink lots of water, rest, eat healthy food (not fatty) and stay away from grog and other drugs.

Hepatitis A can damage your liver. But if you can take care of yourself, you can get better, and you can't get it again.



Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is caused by the hepatitis B virus.

How do you catch hepatitis B?

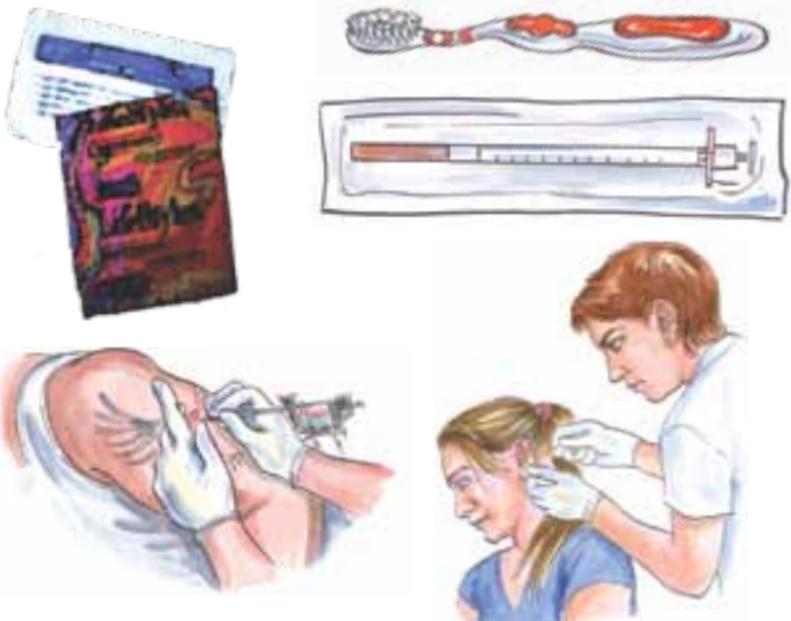
Hepatitis B virus is found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. You can catch it when you have sex or if even a tiny bit of blood from an infected person's gets into your blood.

A mother can pass hepatitis B to her baby in the womb or during birth. If you are pregnant or trying to have a baby, get tested for hepatitis B as early as possible to keep you and your baby healthy.



How do I stop Hepatitis B?

- Get immunised! You can get immunised against hepatitis B by having 3 needles over 6 months. You need to have all 3 needles or you might not be protected. Most babies and kids are now immunised.
- Safe Sex – use condoms, dams and lube every time you have sex.
- Stay with one partner.
- If you inject, use your own needle every time, and don't share needles or other equipment.
- Always use sterile, single use needles for body piercing or tattooing.
- Use your own toothbrush, dental floss and razor.
- Don't let other people's blood get into your blood – cover all cuts and sores.



What if I have it?

Over time, most adults get better. You can help by resting, eating healthy (not fatty) food and staying away from grog and other drugs. You should also have regular men's and women's health checks.

However, some people can feel well but keep the virus in their bodies **and give it to others**. These people can get really sick after many years. There are medicines that can help – talk to your clinic or doctor.

Most babies who get hepatitis B get really sick. That is why you need to get tested if you are pregnant and make sure your baby is immunised at birth.

The good news is that:

- you can get immunised
- If you take care of yourself and get rid of it, you can't get it again.





Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is caused by the hepatitis C virus.

When a person has hepatitis C they often feel weak and tired all the time. This can happen straight away or after a long time.

Without treatment, you can get very sick. With treatment, you won't get so sick and you may be able to get rid of the virus. But, you can catch hepatitis C more than once, and you can catch different types of hepatitis C.

How do you catch it?

You can only catch hepatitis C if the blood of a person with hepatitis C gets into your blood. You cannot tell if someone has hepatitis C just by looking, and often people don't know they have it.

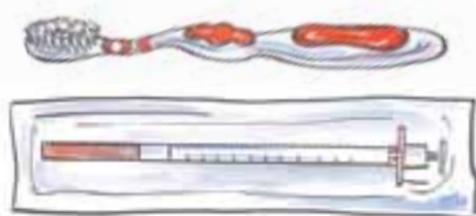
In Australia, most people catch hepatitis C from sharing drug injecting equipment.

There is a tiny chance that a mother can pass hepatitis C to her baby in the womb or during delivery.

If you are pregnant or trying to have a baby, get tested for hepatitis C as early as possible to keep you and your baby healthy.

How do I stop Hepatitis C?

- There is NO immunisation against hepatitis C (only hepatitis A and B).
- If you inject, use your own needle every time. Never share needles and other injecting equipment.
- Always use sterile, single use needles for body piercing or tattooing
- Use your own toothbrush, dental floss and razor.
- Don't let other peoples blood get into your blood – cover all cuts and sores
- Safe Sex- use condoms, dams and lube every time you have sex involving blood or damage to the skin, such as anal sex and/or sex with a woman during her period. The chance of getting hepatitis C through penile-vaginal sex at other times is very low.





What if I have it?

There is no simple treatment - the best treatment is not to get it!

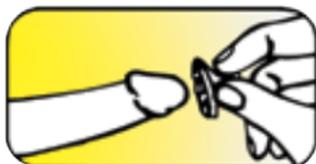
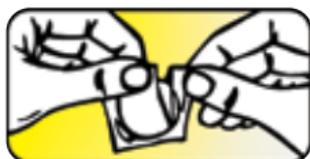
You need to take tablets (pills) and/or have regular injections for up to a year – treatments for hepatitis C are getting better all the time. You can help by resting, eating healthy (not fatty) food and stay away from grog and other drugs. Talk with your clinic or doctor.

What if I don't know I've got Hepatitis A, B or C or if I don't get treated?

The virus can stay in your body and make your liver sick, and you can get very sick and even die. You can also spread hepatitis to other people without knowing it, even if you feel good.

How to use a condom

- Check date and seal of the packet – old condoms break
- Open the packet carefully (don't use teeth)
- Roll on when the penis is hard
- Pinch the tip so air doesn't get trapped as you roll down
- Put on some water based lubricant
- Hold the condom on your penis when you pull out, so semen (cum) doesn't spill out
- Throw the condom in the bin – not down the toilet.



Where to get help

- See your local health clinic or doctor
- Call the Sexual Health Helpline
 - ☎ 9227 6178 (metropolitan callers)
 - ☎ 1800 198 205 (country callers
– free call from a landline only)

**For more information on STIs and HIV,
visit: www.public.health.wa.gov.au**

This document can be made available
in alternative formats on request for
a person with a disability.

Front cover and border illustrations by Sam Cook.

Produced by the
Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program
Public Health and Clinical Services
© Department of Health 2012

