

Viral Hepatitis A and E

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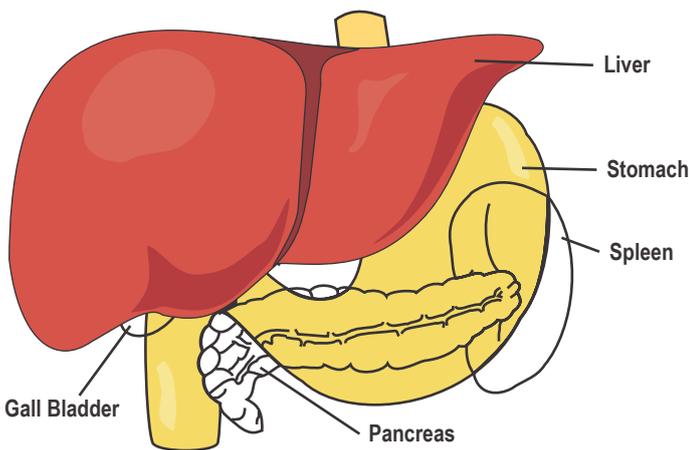
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What is the liver?

The liver is the second largest organ of the body. It performs numerous tasks like storing vital energy and nutrients, manufacturing proteins and enzymes necessary for good health, protecting the body from disease, and also helps remove harmful toxins, like alcohol, from the body.



What is viral hepatitis?

Viral hepatitis is an infection of the liver caused by one of the five hepatitis viruses – A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis D can occur only in the presence of hepatitis B

Hepatitis A and hepatitis E are highly prevalent in India. They are both self limiting diseases. Hepatitis E is seen mostly in young adults with the highest incidence in people between the ages of 15 of 40.

What is hepatitis A virus or hepatitis E virus?

Hepatitis A and E are RNA viruses that can be found in blood, stool and the liver during

the acute phase of the disease in people who are infected.

How can you get hepatitis A or E?

Through contamination of water and food with human waste i.e. feces.

- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor sanitation
- Sexual, especially homosexuals or intimate contact
- Travel to areas with a high incidence of hepatitis A and E
- Ingestion of contaminated food
- Use of recreational drugs

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A and E?

Some patients may be asymptomatic. Especially children may have only fever and jaundice may not even be evident.

- Yellow discoloration of skin and eyes.
- Abdominal swelling or abdominal pain
- Prolonged itching of skin
- Very dark colored urine or pale stools, or passage of bloody or tar like stools
- Fatigue, tiredness, muscles pain
- Nausea and loss of appetite
- Joints pain

How are hepatitis A and E diagnosed?

A blood test is done to diagnose hepatitis A and E.

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How can hepatitis A and E be prevented?

- Improved hygiene
- Drinking clean water
- Proper sanitation
- Improved personal hygiene
- Vaccination for hepatitis A - This vaccine is available and effective. It is given to all children as part of the immunization program. The hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective and given as 2 injections, 6 months apart. Both injections are needed for long-term protection.

Who should be vaccinated?

As per the guidelines of the CDC (Centre for Disease Control USA) the following people should be vaccinated:

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- Family and caregivers of recent adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders

What is the treatment for hepatitis A and E?

- Both resolve spontaneously after 3-4 weeks
- Hospitalization is not needed except if there is acute liver failure
- Symptomatic treatment will be given by the doctor especially for vomiting

What are the complications of hepatitis A and E?

Complications are rare. Acute liver failure can occur, which may require a transplant. Acute liver failure is especially common in pregnant women who develop hepatitis E