

What Is Viral Hepatitis?

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Viral hepatitis is a viral infection that affects the liver. Most people experience flulike signs and symptoms, including fatigue, nausea, and diarrhea. Some people also develop jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).

Viral hepatitis usually goes away by itself. Occasionally it becomes a long-term problem that requires ongoing medical care.

How does viral hepatitis spread?

Some types of viral hepatitis are spread through blood and body fluids, such as saliva and sexual secretions. Other types are primarily spread through fecal-oral contact.

If I have viral hepatitis, could I give it to my close friends and family members?

Yes, but you can help to protect them by:

- not handling or preparing food they eat
- not sharing eating utensils, glasses, or cups
- using disposable cups, utensils, and plates if you don't have an automatic dishwasher, which gets hotter than the faucet water used for hand washing dishes
- washing your hands often with warm soapy water, especially after using the bathroom
- not donating blood or sharing needles
- using a barrier method such as condoms during sexual contact

Protective vaccines and immune globulin preparations are available for hepatitis A and B. Ask your health care provider if your friends and household members should get those shots.

More Important Instructions

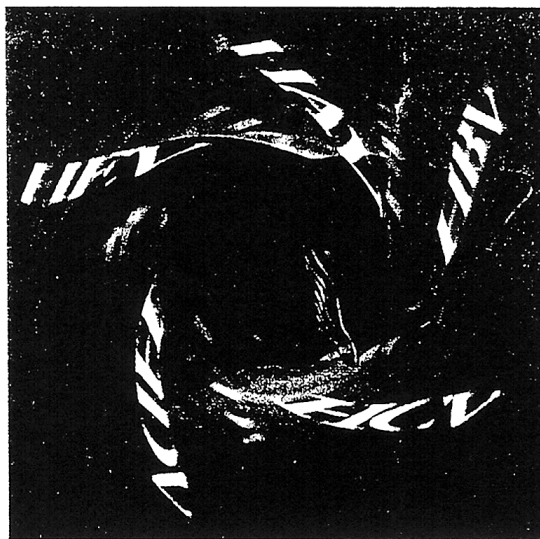
- Rest and remain inactive until signs and symptoms begin to resolve, usually in 1 to 3 months. Then go back to your usual activities slowly.
- Avoid any activities, such as contact sports, biking, running, wrestling, diving, and lifting or pushing heavy objects, that could cause you to fall or hit your stomach against something hard.

- Eat the largest meal of the day in the morning. That will help you to get enough calories even when you aren't hungry and to keep up your energy. Talk with your health care provider about which foods to eat.

- Discuss with your provider any medications you plan to take before you take them. That includes prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, folk remedies, and herbal preparations. During the acute (early) phase of hepatitis, your liver may not be

able to break down certain medications.

- Don't drink alcohol until your provider says it's okay.
- You will probably be asked to see your health care provider often during the early part of your illness so that he or she can monitor your liver function, an important part of getting better. Be sure to keep all appointments.



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