Hepatitis Awareness: Know Your ABCs and Ds and Es

May 24, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Do you know your viral hepatitis alphabet? There are five designations for viral hepatitis: A, B, C, D, and E. There used to be and F and a G, but these have been removed from the viral hepatitis alphabet. Hepatitis F turned out not to be anything more than hypothetical. Hepatitis G, although closely related to hepatitis C, was found to replicate more in the lymphatic system than the liver, so it was reclassified and named GB virus C (GBV-C). Infection with GBV-C seems to have no symptoms. Approximately 2 percent of healthy blood donors in the United States have GBV-C, and up to 13 percent antibodies, indicating possible prior infection.

Hepatitis A: For the past year, this virus constantly appears in hepatitis-related news as municipalities across the United States are dealing with hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreaks. HAV is preventable since there is a vaccine against it. HAV is spread from one person to another when the feces of someone with HAV gets into another person's mouth (oral-fecal route). Once you are infected, you usually recover and are immune to further infections. Click here for more about hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a highly contagious viral infection that can cause liver damage. The virus is easily spread via hep B–positive blood, semen or other body fluid. Pregnant women who have hepatitis B can also transmit the virus to their babies, usually during birth. There is not yet a cure for hepatitis B, but there are drugs to help manage the condition. People who have not been infected with HBV can be vaccinated against the virus to prevent infection. Click here for more about hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C: Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is the most common bloodborne virus. It is potentially contagious, but curable. Asymptomatic for many years, if untreated it can cause lifelong infection, fibrosis (mild to moderate liver scarring), cirrhosis (serious liver scarring), liver cancer, liver failure, and death. Ever year, more people die as a result of hep C than from all other 60 reportable infectious diseased combined. There is no vaccine to prevent it. Click here for more about hepatitis C.

Hepatitis D: Hepatitis D virus (HDV) only occurs in people who are infected with the hepatitis B virus since HDV requires the help of HBV to replicate. Hepatitis D is also known as delta hepatitis. People who have hepatitis D are at a higher risk of having more severe symptoms of hepatitis and a higher risk of developing acute liver failure compared with those who have only hepatitis B. The

hepatitis B vaccine prevents hepatitis D by preventing HBV. Click here for more about hepatitis D.

Hepatitis E: Hepatitis E virus (HEV) is a virus that we are starting to learn more about. We used to think that it was limited to certain developing countries. However, we now know that HEV also occurs in most high-income countries. HEV is spread through poor sanitation (oral-fecal route) and contaminated water. HEV is also a zoonotic infection, spread via animals, mostly by eating uncooked or undercooked pork. Eating contaminated shellfish may also be a risk factor.

The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) released a new clinical practice guideline for hepatitis E, published in Journal of Hepatology.

Have you learned anything new lately about viral hepatitis or liver disease? If so, tweet @hepatitismag so we can share it.

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/hepatitis-awareness-know-abcs-ds-es