Hepatitis D Facts and Information

Hepatitis D is a virus that can exist while being infected with hepatitis B at the same time, meaning this is a co-infection. A superinfection can occur if you already have chronic hepatitis B and then become infected with hepatitis D.

October 23, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

Hepatitis D is transmitted in the same way as hepatitis B and much like hepatitis C. See risk factors. While there is no vaccine for hepatitis D directly, be proactive and receive the vaccine for hepatitis B to reduce your chances of infection with Hepatitis D.

There are 5 types of hepatitis, A, B, C, D, and E. The most common types of hepatitis in the United States are hepatitis A, B, and C. Hepatitis D and E are not as prevalent in the United States but can certainly occur.

More cases of hepatitis D are reported in:

- South America
- West Africa
- Russia
- Pacific Islands
- Central Asia
- Mediterranean

Transmission Causes

Hepatitis D spreads the same way hepatitis B spreads, through contact with infected blood or an infected person's body fluids. The hepatitis D virus can cause an acute (short term-less than 6 months) or lead to a chronic infection (long-lasting). Hepatitis D can lead to severe scarring (cirrhosis) of the liver, risk of liver cancer, and other extrahepatic conditions.

Additional Transmission Risks:

- Contact with an infected person's blood or other body fluids, such as semen, vaginal fluid, and urine.

- If you've had a blood or blood type transfusion or organ transplant prior to July 1992.
- Received a clotting factor made before 1987.
- Ever had hemodialysis.
- Contaminated needle stick or blood in a hospital or healthcare environment.
- Shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs or inhales drugs (even once).
- Tattoos or body piercing with reused unsterile tools.
- Have ever worked or been housed in prison.
- Have HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).
- Unexplained liver problems or inflammation, including abnormal liver tests
- Shared razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers with someone who is infected
- Born to an infected Mother
- Multiple sex partners or sex with partners who have other sexually transmitted diseases, or rough sex.
- High risk includes men who have sex with other men
- Some people who do not have risk factors may never know where they contracted the virus.

Symptoms

Symptoms do not always show up right away with hepatitis D even though the patient may have a chronic infection. Symptoms are much like that of hepatitis B and can include:

- Yellowing of skin and eyes, called jaundice
- Joint pain
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Dark Urine
- Fatigue

Treatment

Currently, there is no treatment for hepatitis D. Antiviral treatment has shown very little effect to

treat or clear the virus. Being monitored by a liver specialist (hepatologist or gastroenterologist) is recommended.

Vaccine

The hepatitis B vaccine will help prevent hepatitis D. The vaccine can also be given to infants and children at risk for hepatitis B and D.

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