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IDA's Advice

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

Increased awareness is needed about the burden of disease and premature death associated with viral hepatitis. An estimated 4.5 million Americans have chronic Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, which together account for the major cause of chronic liver disease and liver cancer.

What is Hepatitis?

"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver and refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When inflamed or damaged, the liver's function can be affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications and certain medical conditions can cause hepatitis. But hepatitis is most often caused by a virus.

In the United States, the most common types of viral hepatitis are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C – infections caused by three different, unrelated viruses. Hepatitis A occurs in an "acute" (time-limited) form, while Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C can develop into lifelong, chronic illnesses. In the United States, many of the 4.5 million people who are chronically infected with viral hepatitis do not know they are infected. Refer to www.cdc.gov for further information.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*.

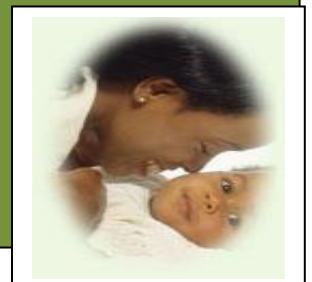
Pertussis is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. After fits of many coughs, someone with pertussis often needs to take deep breathes which result in a "whooping" sound. Pertussis most commonly affects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age.

The best way to protect against pertussis is immunization.

Signs & Symptoms

Early symptoms can last for 1 to 2 weeks and may include:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever (generally minimal throughout the course of the disease)
- Mild, occasional cough

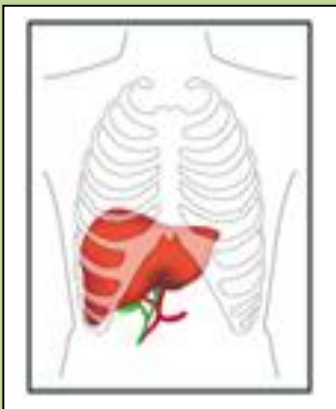


How Is Hepatitis Spread?

Hepatitis A is spread when a person ingests microscopic amounts of fecal matter from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by the feces or stool from an infected person. Virus is present in the stool of persons with hepatitis A for several weeks. Although anyone can get Hepatitis A, some people are at greater risk such as those who travel to or live in countries where Hepatitis A is common, have sexual contact with someone who has Hepatitis A, or are household members or caregivers of a person infected with Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the Hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sexual contact with an infected person or sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment. Hepatitis B can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Hepatitis B is not spread through breastfeeding, sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.

Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person infected with the Hepatitis C virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment with an infected person. Before widespread screening of the blood supply began in 1992, Hepatitis C was also commonly spread through blood transfusions and organ transplants. Hepatitis C is not spread through breastfeeding, sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing. Refer to CDC website for detailed information or go to www.cdc.gov/features/viralHepatitis/



How Serious Is Viral Hepatitis?

Over time, about 15% to 25% of people with chronic hepatitis develop serious liver problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer. With early detection, many people can get lifesaving care and treatment that can limit disease progression, prevent cancer deaths, and help break the cycle of unknowingly transmitting the virus to others.

If you think you might be at risk for viral hepatitis, talk to your health professional or health department about vaccination and testing.

Can Viral Hepatitis Be Prevented?

Yes! Viral Hepatitis can be prevented.

- The best way to prevent Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated.
- All children should be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B.
- Many adults are at risk for Hepatitis A and/or Hepatitis B and should also be vaccinated.
- There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C but you can prevent Hepatitis C by not sharing needles or other equipment to inject cosmetic substances, drugs, or steroids; by not using personal items that may have come into contact with an infected person's blood, such as razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, or glucose monitors; and by not getting tattoos or body piercings at an unlicensed facility or in an informal setting.



Know the **FACTS** about pertussis

Pertussis, a respiratory illness commonly known as whooping cough, is a very contagious disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. These bacteria attach to the cilia (tiny, hair-like extensions) that line part of the upper respiratory system. The bacteria release toxins, which damage the cilia and cause inflammation (swelling).

Transmission

Pertussis is a very contagious disease only found in humans and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease (Bisgard, 2004 & Wendelboe, 2007). Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 7 – 10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 6 weeks.

Pertussis vaccines are very effective in protecting you from disease but no vaccine is 100% effective. If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is a chance that a fully vaccinated person, of any age, can catch this very contagious disease. If you have been vaccinated, the infection is usually less severe. If you or your child develops a cold that includes a severe cough or a cough that lasts for a long time, it may be pertussis. The best way to know is to contact your doctor.

Reference Source: www.cdc.gov.

Speak with your healthcare provider today for screening and treatment advice.

Prevention – Vaccines

The best way to prevent pertussis (whooping cough) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people.

In the United States, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTaP. This is a combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. For maximum protection against pertussis, children need five DTaP shots. The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. The fourth shot is given between 15 and 18 months of age, and a fifth shot is given before a child enters school, at 4–6 years of age. Parents can also help protect infants by keeping them away as much as possible from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.