



## ADVICE AND FACTS ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

DET HÄR ÄR EN ÖVERSÄTTNING TILL ENGELSKA AV FAKTABLADET RÅD OCH FAKTA OM SEXUELLT ÖVERFÖRDA INFEKTIONER – HEPATIT.

# Hepatitis

Hepatitis (or jaundice) is a generic term for an inflammation of the liver which can be caused by a number of different viruses. Various types of hepatitis can be transmitted via e.g. food or via blood when unclean needles are used. Some types of hepatitis can also be transmitted sexually. This applies especially to hepatitis A and B. Sexual transmission of hepatitis C is also possible, although it is less common.

Hepatitis is covered by the Communicable Diseases Act, which means that you have the right to a free test if you suspect that you may be infected. Being vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, consistently using condoms during intercourse and not sharing injection devices with others are strategies that can be adopted so as not to become infected.

### Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread mainly via drinking water or food that has been contaminated with sewage, in countries with poor sanitation. As viruses are secreted via excrement, hepatitis A can also be transmitted from person to person via close contact, such as sexual contact.

A person who is infected may after a number of weeks fall ill with fever and nausea, followed by vomiting and yellowing of the whites of the eyes and the skin. The urine becomes dark in colour and excrement becomes lighter. The symptoms can vary in strength. Some are unaware that they have been infected, and for others the only symptoms are fatigue and a reduced appetite for a few weeks to a few months. The diagnosis is established by means of a blood test.

There is no treatment for hepatitis A. The infection goes away by itself and is completely gone after a few months. A person who has had hepatitis A gains an immunity which protects them from reinfection for the rest of their life. There is also an effective vaccine against hepatitis A.

### Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread via infected blood and unclean needles, for example when getting a tattoo or injecting drugs. An infected mother can also transmit the infection to her children during delivery. The diseases can also be transmitted sexually via vaginal or anal sex.

The symptoms are often mild; the most common being fatigue, aching joints and poor appetite. Sometimes, the whites of the eyes and the skin can also turn yellow. It can take up to six months after infection for the symptoms to appear. In most cases, the infection heals and leads to life-long immunity. In a minority of cases, the infection becomes chronic instead. This means that there remains a certain risk of infecting others via sexual contact or blood. A chronic infection also entails a risk of complications later in the form of cirrhosis of the liver and even cancer of the liver. Medicine can slow the damage the virus causes to the liver, and in some cases even cure the disease. The diagnosis is established via blood sample, which is also used to see whether or not the infection has been cured. There is an effective vaccine against hepatitis B.

### Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is transmitted mainly via blood and by sharing unclean needles when injecting drugs. Sexual transmission is uncommon but also possible, especially among people who have been infected with HIV.

Often Hepatitis C does not have any noticeable symptoms or only has light symptoms in the form of tiredness and nausea for a few weeks to months after infection. The diagnosis is established by means of a blood test. A large share of those who are infected become chronic carriers and continue to be infectious. Over time they may develop cirrhosis of the liver and in some cases cancer of the liver. There is now efficient medicine which in most cases results in the infection being cured. However, there is no vaccine against hepatitis C.

