



Your Health and Hepatitis

Quarterly Health Initiative

3rd Issue

April 1 – June 30, 2010

What is Viral Hepatitis?

Viral Hepatitis is a group of diseases that can damage your liver. The most common and dangerous are Hepatitis B and C which can be transmitted sexually or through contaminated blood. Certain behaviors, like using shared tooth brushes, razors, needles, piercing, tattooing or drug ingestion equipment, may place you at higher risk to getting those infections. Common symptoms include yellow skin (jaundice), belly pain, depression, joint pain, discolored or clay colored bowel movements and dark urine. Getting tested is important as some people don't have symptoms until they are ill.

How can Hepatitis affect your health?

Hepatitis B and C are chronic diseases that can lead to life-long issues like liver cancer or liver failure, and potentially death. People living with Hepatitis B and C often experience a lack of energy and may become unable to participate in regular life activities. The liver is important in breaking down drugs which enter your body. If you have Hepatitis and don't know it, medications and/or illegal drugs may harm your liver. Severe liver diseases may require a liver transplant.

Tips to prevent Hepatitis

- Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B (there is no vaccine for Hep-C).
- Don't share needles, syringes or other drug ingestion equipment (pipes, straws, joints) or "drug cooking" equipment.
- Don't share jewelry, piercing or tattooing equipment.
- Practice safe sex. Never use an outdated latex condom when participating in sexual activities.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Excessive alcohol may cause long term liver damage.

If you are living with Hepatitis B or C

- Talk to your health care provider about your liver health issues.
- Don't drink alcohol or use illegal drugs as they pose potential harm to you and increase liver damage.
- Talk to your health care provider about all medications or vitamins you are currently taking.
- Limit red meat and include fruits, vegetables and whole grains in your daily diet.
- Everyday be sure to exercise, drink at least a gallon of water and get plenty of rest.

Ask to your behavioral health medical provider and/or medical doctor:

- How and where can I get tested for Hepatitis B and C?
- How do I know if the medications I'm currently taking could be impacting the health of my liver?

Share with your health care provider information about your general life habits, non prescribed drug use, diet and eating habits, physical activity and any other important information. You shouldn't be concerned about sharing this information as it will help you and your health provider assess your health history and needs.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Get tested for Hepatitis, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases every year
- Never share drug injection equipment
- Eat healthy
- Limit alcohol/drug use
- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise regularly
- Get annual physicals from your primary care doctor

ONLINE TOOLS

For more information please visit:

- ▶ www.cdc.gov/hepatitis
- ▶ <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/hpc/index.htm>



Division of Behavioral Health Services

This flyer and related materials can be found online at:
www.azdhs.gov/bhs/qhi/