



香港紅十字會  
HONG KONG RED CROSS

# Understanding Hepatitis

五星健康  
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教育計劃

Hepatitis refers to inflammation of the liver. In Hong Kong, viral hepatitis is more common. Hepatitis caused by alcohol, drugs, chemicals or genetic diseases is less common.

According to government statistics in 2020, there are approximately 540,000 and 22,000 people infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses respectively in Hong Kong.

Both Hepatitis B and C virus infections can lead to chronic hepatitis, which can potentially develop into cirrhosis and liver cancer. Studies have shown that over 70% of liver cancer cases in Hong Kong are related to chronic Hepatitis B.

## Symptoms of Hepatitis

Acute infection with a hepatitis virus may result in a series of symptoms such as tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, yellowing of eye sclera and tea-coloured urine, or the patient may be totally well.



## Types of Viral Hepatitis

The more commonly seen viral hepatitis in Hong Kong includes hepatitis A, B, C and E. There are other rarer types of viral hepatitis such as viral hepatitis D and G.

**Hepatitis A and E** are transmitted by consumption of contaminated water and food, such as shellfish



**Hepatitis B** is transmitted by sexual contact or sharing injection instruments with an infected person, transfusion of infected blood or blood products, or from an infected mother at the time of delivery and infancy period.

- Other possible routes of transmission include tattooing, ear piercing or acupuncture with contaminated instruments.
- All these routes of transmission result in contact with body fluid containing the virus.
- In Hong Kong, about 8-10% of the population are chronic carriers of hepatitis B who have an increased risk of developing chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis and liver cancer.
- The Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service screen all donated blood for this virus to prevent transmission by transfusion

**Hepatitis C** include transfusion of blood or blood products containing the virus, sexual contact with an infected person or sharing contaminated injection instruments

- In Hong Kong, about 0.5% of the population are chronic carriers of hepatitis C. There is also a chronic infection state with an increased risk of development of cirrhosis and liver cancer



# Diagnosis and Treatment

- There is currently no definitive effective cure for acute hepatitis. There are drug treatments that may be indicated for selected patients with chronic hepatitis B and C infection.
- As the symptoms of hepatitis caused by different hepatitis viruses are similar, the type of hepatitis may only be diagnosed through blood tests.
- The doctor will carry out a series of investigations such as blood tests to ascertain the diagnosis and will recommend an appropriate treatment regimen depending on the patient's condition.



## Prevention

### Reduce of risk of contracting hepatitis A and E:

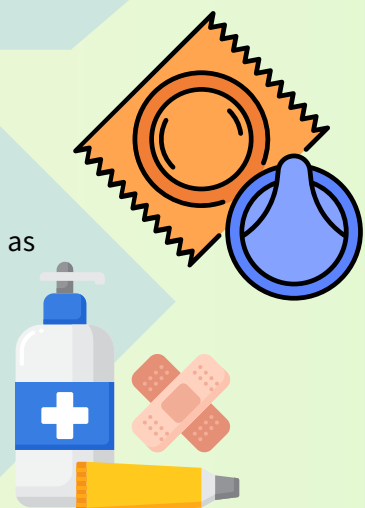
- Consume thoroughly-cooked food, especially seafood
- Avoid eating food from illegal food vendor or hawker
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap before handling food or after going to toilet



There are also effective vaccines for hepatitis A and B available in Hong Kong. Since 1988, Hong Kong has started the universal neonate hepatitis B vaccination programme

### Reduce the risk of infection of hepatitis B and C:

- Practise safer sex (such as proper use of condom)
- Do not share needles, sharp instruments such as razors, and personal items such as toothbrush
- Handle sharp objects with great care to avoid needle prick injury
- Handle open wound properly
- Make sure non-disposable instruments are thoroughly disinfected before re-use



### What can I do if I have viral hepatitis?

- Avoid alcohol which is harmful to your liver.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Exercise regularly with advice from your doctor.
- Have adequate rest. Do not exert yourself.
- Do not take any non-prescribed drugs. Many drugs have a damaging effect on the liver.
- Quit smoking.



#### References:

Viral Hepatitis Control Office,  
Department of Health  
Centre for Health Protection,  
Department of Health

The above information  
is for reference only.

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