

# The Health Letter™

News for People, Families, Communities: Focus on Hepatitis

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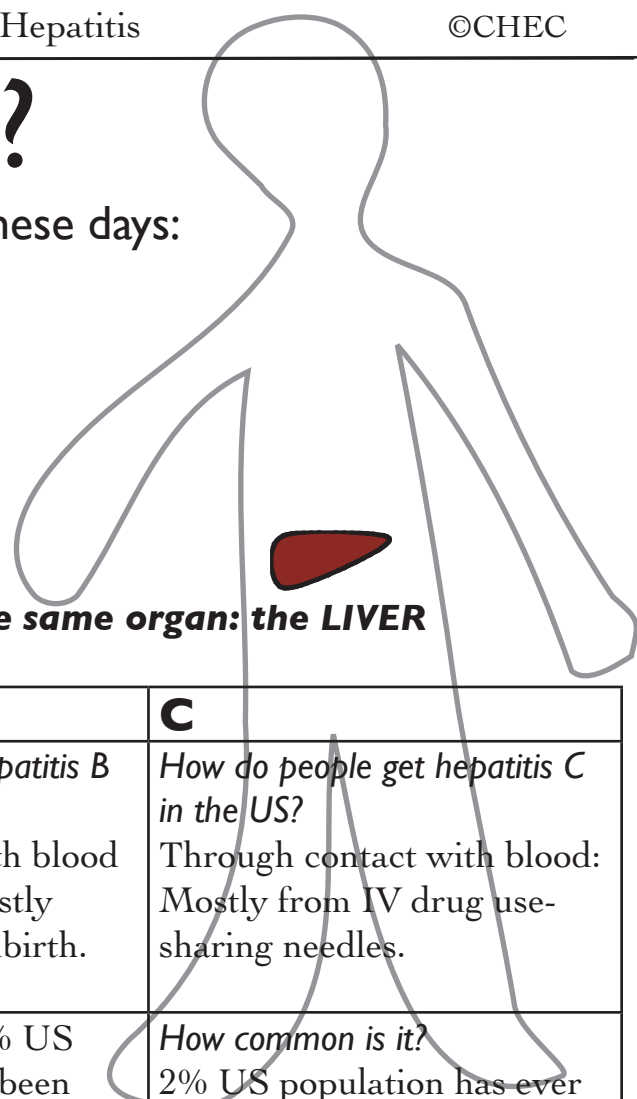
## What is Hepatitis?

We seem to hear about hepatitis a lot these days:

- hepatitis A outbreaks in some states, on the news  
--linked to certain foods or restaurants!
- hepatitis B and liver cancer in young people!
- hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS!

What *is* hepatitis, and why are we hearing about it?

**Hepatitis = Different diseases that affect the same organ: the LIVER**



<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<p><i>How do people get hepatitis A in the US?</i> Mostly from poor hygiene (like not washing hands), contaminated foods.</p>	<p><i>How do people get hepatitis B in the US?</i> Through contact with blood and body fluids: Mostly sexually and in childbirth.</p>	<p><i>How do people get hepatitis C in the US?</i> Through contact with blood: Mostly from IV drug use-sharing needles.</p>
<p><i>How common is it?</i> 33% US population has ever been infected with hepatitis A. It is more common outside US.</p>	<p><i>How common is it?</i> 5% US population has ever been infected with hepatitis B. More common in some countries. 1.25 million persons with chronic disease; 5,000 chronic liver deaths/year.</p>	<p><i>How common is it?</i> 2% US population has ever been infected with hepatitis C 2.7 million persons with chronic disease; 8,000-10,000 chronic liver deaths/year</p>
<p><i>Is there a vaccine?</i> Yes.</p>	<p><i>Is there a vaccine?</i> Yes.</p>	<p><i>Is there a vaccine?</i> No.</p>
<p><i>Can it be a chronic disease?</i> No.</p>	<p><i>Can it be a chronic disease?</i> Yes.</p>	<p><i>Can it be a chronic disease?</i> Yes.</p>

# What can you do to protect yourself and those you love against hepatitis?



1. **Get immunized!** There are vaccines for hepatitis A and B. They are safe and effective—they are the best way to stay safe from these diseases.

All children should start their hepatitis A series (2-shots) at one year old. If your child has not had a hepatitis A shot, ask your doctor now.

All children should start their hepatitis B series at birth (3-shots). If your child has not had a hepatitis B vaccination (including—and especially—teens!), ask your doctor now.

Any adults at risk for hepatitis A or B should also be immunized. This can include people who travel to other countries to live or work, people with more than one sexual partner in the past six months, people who use IV drugs, people who are on dialysis treatment, and healthcare workers. Ask your doctor if you should get the hepatitis A and B vaccinations!

2. **Practice safe sex.** Limit your number of sexual partners, use condoms.

3. **If you use IV drugs, get help quitting.** Meanwhile, use clean needles and works.

4. **Wash your hands!** Wash them often, especially before eating and preparing food, and after going to the bathroom or changing a diaper.

5. **Wash your food.** Wash fresh produce well before eating.

6. **Make sure your water is safe.** Drink water from taps and sources that you know are clean.



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