

## FACT SHEET

# HEPATITIS D

## (Viral hepatitis D, Hepatitis delta virus, Delta agent hepatitis, Delta associated hepatitis)

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### **What is hepatitis D?**

Hepatitis D is a virus that infects the liver. Hepatitis D, or Delta hepatitis, is always associated with a hepatitis B infection. A person may recover from Delta hepatitis or it may progress to chronic hepatitis.

### **Who gets hepatitis D?**

Hepatitis D can only occur if the person has hepatitis B. Hepatitis D virus (HDV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) may infect a person at the same time or HDV infection may occur in persons with chronic HBV infection.

### **How is the virus spread?**

The hepatitis D virus is spread by exposure to blood and serous body fluids, contaminated needles and syringes, and via sexual transmission.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Onset of hepatitis D is usually sudden. Symptoms include tiredness, nausea, vomiting, fever, stomach pain, tea-colored urine, and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice). Hepatitis D infection in someone with chronic hepatitis B may be misdiagnosed as a worsening of chronic hepatitis B.

### **How soon do the symptoms appear?**

Symptoms occur approximately 2 - 8 weeks after infection.

### **How long can an infected person spread the virus?**

A person can spread the virus as long as it remains in their blood. The highest risk of exposure occurs just before the onset of acute illness.

### **How is hepatitis D diagnosed?**

A blood test is used to detect infection with the hepatitis D virus.

### **Can a person get hepatitis D again?**

If antibodies develop, one infection with the hepatitis D virus protects a person from getting it again. Since there are different kinds of hepatitis, infection with hepatitis D will not stop a person from getting other types of hepatitis.

### **What is the treatment for hepatitis D?**

There is no specific treatment that can make the infection go away. People who are sick with hepatitis D should see a doctor for advice about how to control their symptoms.

### **What can be done if a person comes into contact with someone infected with hepatitis D?**

If the person does not have hepatitis B, they will not get hepatitis D. If the person has hepatitis B there is nothing that can be done to protect the person from hepatitis D. Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG), immune globulin (IG) and hepatitis B vaccine do not protect hepatitis B carriers from infection by HDV.

### **How can infection with hepatitis D be prevented?**

Never share needles for drug use, ear piercing, tattooing, or any other purpose. Avoid contact with the blood or wound drainage of any other person. Use condoms when having sex.

### **Is there a vaccine to prevent hepatitis D?**

Yes, there is a vaccine to protect against hepatitis D. For those persons not previously infected with hepatitis B the hepatitis B vaccine will protect them. This works by protecting against hepatitis B, which in turn protects against HDV. Protection is given because only people infected with hepatitis B virus can become infected with hepatitis D virus.