

# EXPECT MORE

Everyone Deserves Good Health

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National LGBT Health Awareness Week

### HEPATITIS

"Hepatitis" means inflammation or swelling of the liver. Lots of things can cause swelling of the liver such as drinking alcohol, use of certain prescription medications and viruses. Swelling can occur one time or be chronic, depending on the source.

Hepatitis A and B tend to be time-limited sources of liver inflammation (2 weeks to 6 months). Hepatitis C tends to be a source of chronic swelling of the liver (lasting more than 6 months; however, there is inflammation and then shrinkage over about a 20-30 year period). Chronic alcohol use results in long-term inflammation of the liver; shrinkage of the liver results when there is absence of alcohol.

Although hepatitis can affect anyone, those who have unprotected sex or share drug equipment, including hormone supplies, can be at increased risk for viral hepatitis.

**Hepatitis A** is spread by getting contaminated feces into one's mouth. This can happen through contact with contaminated food or water, oral-anal sex, handling a used condom or sex toys, or anal play. There is a vaccine.

**Hepatitis B** is transmitted through bodily fluids (blood, semen, saliva), through unprotected sexual contact and sharing needles. There is a vaccine.

**Hepatitis C** is spread blood to blood, usually by sharing syringes and other drug equipment (i.e. cotton, cooker, water). Some cases have resulted from unprotected sex with an infected person and non-sterile piercings and tattooing. No vaccine is available.

Hepatitis is easily spread during initial infection because there are often no symptoms and a lot of virus present in body fluids. If symptoms occur, common signs are extreme fatigue, appetite loss, nausea, vomiting, jaundice, dark urine and sometimes dull abdominal pain.

Take these steps to lower your risk of contracting hepatitis:

- Get vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B! Persons with multiple sex partners, who inject drugs, are HIV or hepatitis C positive benefit from hepatitis A and B vaccines. Go to [www.hepclinics.com](http://www.hepclinics.com) for a national list of clinics offering free or low-cost hepatitis vaccinations.
- Get tested for if you are at risk for exposure.
- Talk to your doctor if you have any questions

EXPECT MORE: You can protect yourself against hepatitis!

**For more information, please see:**

Gay Health ([www.gayhealth.com](http://www.gayhealth.com))

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association ([www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org))

HCV Advocate ([www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org))

National Coalition for LGBT Health ([www.lgbthealth.net](http://www.lgbthealth.net))

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