# Hepatitis E

Hepatitis E is a type of viral hepatitis. It is caused by exposure to hepatitis E virus. It is transmitted by the fecal-oral route. Usually it is through contaminated water. Long standing (*chronic*) infection does not happen. But acute hepatitis may be fatal in pregnant women. That is especially true in the third trimester (last three months). This is also called enterically transmitted non-A, non-B hepatitis. The highest attack rate is among persons aged 15 - 40 years.

## CAUSES

HEV is found in the stool (*feces*) of persons and animals with hepatitis E. It is spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Transmission from person to person occurs less often than with hepatitis A virus. Most outbreaks in developing countries have come from contaminated drinking water.

## SYMPTOMS

- Jaundice.
- Loss of appetite.
- Fatigue.
- Nausea, vomiting.
- Abdominal pain.
- Dark (tea colored) urine.

## TREATMENT

Treatment is supportive. This means there are no medications to kill the virus. But the infected person can be made more comfortable.

## PREVENTION

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing and eating food.
- Avoid:
  - Drinking water (and beverages with ice) of unknown purity.
  - Eating uncooked shellfish, and uncooked fruits or vegetables that you have not peeled or prepared.

*This information is courtesy of the Division of Viral Hepatitis, a branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for HIV/AIDS, STD and TB Prevention*
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