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Hepatitis B and relationships

Dr Alice Lam

Latest

Parliamentary Morning Tea: We can eliminate hepatitis C!

The Parliamentary Friends Group for Action of Blood Borne Viruses Co-Chairs, Tim Wilson, MP and Senator Louise Pratt invite you to

“Having HBV is only a small facet of who you are, and not a reason to give up on a loving relationship. A partner who accepts you as you are and wants the best for you is someone who will not see HBV as a barrier to getting to know you.” – Lindsey¹, member of the Hepatitis B Information and Support List, Hepatitis B Foundation blog

Although most people get hepatitis B at birth, it can be transmitted in other ways including sex. This article contains information about how it is spread, and how you can keep your partner safe.

How Hepatitis B is spread through sex

Hepatitis B contained in blood, semen or other fluids can be spread through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex. As it is very infectious, it transmits easily through breaks in the skin or mucous membranes (the lining of the nose, mouth, eyes and other soft tissues)².

We also need to remember that hepatitis B infection can occur through non-sexual contact such as sharing toothbrushes, razors or contact with an infected open wound.

However, it is not spread through normal hugging or kissing, or sharing meals, showers or toilets with someone who has hepatitis B³.

How can we prevent the spread of hepatitis B?

a Parliamentary Morning Tea on Thursday 12 November.

Renewed calls for Needle & Syringe Programs in prisons ahead of International Drug Users Day

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and Hepatitis Australia are highlighting international calls for Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) in prisons, along with a greater focus on harm reduction initiatives, ahead of International Drug Users Day on 1 November.

Investment in hepatitis research needs to be accompanied by National Strategy implementation funding

6 October 2020 - Hepatitis Australia welcomes the Australian Government's commitment to diverse hepatitis research, however we remain concerned that the 2019 Health Budget funding for hepatitis

The best way to prevent hepatitis B infection, is to get vaccinated. Given hepatitis B can be spread in many different ways, it is strongly advised that all household contacts and sexual partners should be vaccinated, as well as using condoms with sexual partners⁴. By the way, vaccination is usually free for the above groups⁵.

If you are concerned you may have been put at risk of hepatitis B, or that you may have put someone else at risk, contact your GP or local sexual health clinic straight away. Your doctor can also contact a sexual partner for you, without including your details if you wish to stay anonymous.

Telling others about your diagnosis

After you have had time to come to terms with your diagnosis⁶, you may wish to start thinking about disclosing your condition to others.

There are many possible reasons for disclosure, such as:

- one or more sexual partners have been possibly exposed to the virus during sex without a condom
- you are embarking on a new relationship.

Knowing when and how to disclose can be difficult. Some people may be supportive, whereas others may withdraw or even be angry. Often this is due to their lack of knowledge about the condition. Be prepared that a relationship may change or even end.

Here are some tips that may help with the process⁷:

- Make sure you know the basics about hepatitis B so you can answer some of the more common questions.

commitments is yet to hit the ground.

Related

Hepatitis B Guide

Testing, treatment and staying healthy. This guide is to help you understand the process from being tested for hepatitis B (often called hep B) to living well with chronic (life-long) hep B.

What is hepatitis B?

Basic information about hepatitis B transmission and how it affects people.

Hepatitis B vaccination

Hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.

Most read

- Before you speak to them, practise how the conversation might go with a good friend, considering both best and worst scenarios.
- Choose a meeting place where you feel comfortable and safe. Face-to-face is usually best, rather than through email, for instance.
- Ask them to keep your diagnosis confidential.
- Bring something you can show like a leaflet or point them to a website like Hepatitis Australia or the National Hepatitis Infoline phone number 1800 437 222.
- Give the person time and space to digest what you tell them.
- Look after your own mental health during and after disclosing.

Finally, you may find these insights help you to negotiate your own relationships and communicate your diagnosis.

Coronavirus COVID-19 factsheet for people with hepatitis B and hepatitis C

Hepatitis Australia has put together a brief factsheet with information about the coronavirus COVID-19 for people living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Hepatitis A

Basic information about hepatitis A in Australia

COVID-19

Information on the coronavirus COVID-19 for people affected by hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

“My personal philosophy and method is to be selective about the people I choose to date. To me, it is important if the potential date has common sense and good character. Once I feel this person is worthy of my time and attention, I have the talk about my hepatitis B, and that HBV is vaccine preventable. If they are interested in continuing a romantic relationship with me, they need to be vaccinated to protect against HBV. Some may have already been vaccinated, and if so, HBV is no longer an issue.”

“You need to approach dating, not as who will ‘accept’ you, but rather who ‘deserves’ you. Perspective is everything. If you see a health issue like HBV as a unique barrier to intimacy others will not understand and might reject you for, you will create self-defeating thoughts that not only limit your happiness, but are inaccurate. Everyone has issues. Whether it is health, mental, social or financial, we all feel alone at times and want a connection with another soul.” – Lindsey¹, member of the Hepatitis B Information and Support List, Hepatitis B Foundation blog

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