

## **Hepatitis E**

Hepatitis E is a viral inflammation of the liver that is very similar to viral hepatitis A. It can occur without obvious signs in the gastrointestinal tract. The disease occurs in the liver and the main symptom is jaundice, which is known as jaundice of the skin and mucous membranes.

### **The cause**

The disease is caused by the hepatitis E virus, which is shed by patients.

### **Incubation period**

The time from infection to the onset of signs of disease is about 3-6 weeks, but can be shorter (up to 15 days) or longer (up to 64 days), depending on a person's immune status and the infectious dose they receive.

### **Period of infectivity**

A person is infectious as early as 2 weeks before the onset of signs of disease and during the course of the disease, when large quantities of pathogens are excreted in the faeces.

Some people get infected but do not get sick with symptoms, but pass viruses in their faeces. These are the carriers that spread the disease.

### **Susceptibility**

Viral hepatitis E can affect anyone, but it is particularly dangerous for the elderly, chronic patients and those with liver damage. After recovering from the disease, lifelong immunity remains.

### **Clinical signs**

In most cases, non-specific problems due to liver inflammation occur first: fatigue, malaise, pain under the right rib cage. After this, jaundice may occur, with light-coloured stools and dark-coloured urine. In the elderly, the course of the disease without jaundice is more common.

### **Transmission**

Hepatitis E viruses are ingested through food, water or dirty hands. The causative agent is thus excreted in the stool of the person who has the disease for a certain period of time. From the patient or carrier, the agent is released back into the environment, and in unhygienic conditions the infection spreads to healthy persons.

### **Treatment**

Treatment of viral hepatitis E is symptomatic. Rest is advised. The disease usually resolves on its own without sequelae.

### **General preventive measures**

#### *Proper management of human and animal faeces:*

- The disease spreads more easily in areas where there is no sewerage system.

#### *Washing hands and teeth:*

- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and clean water after using the toilet, before preparing food and before eating.
- Brush your teeth only with drinking water.

#### *Food:*

- Eat only well-baked/cooked food that has just been prepared.
- Eat vegetables that have been well washed in drinking water.
- People with hepatitis E should not work in the production, marketing and sale of food, in the supply of drinking water to the public, or in the care and feeding of young children.

#### *Water:*

- Drink only water that is safe for human consumption.
- In unregulated or questionable environments, drink bottled water or boil it before use and use it for no more than 24 hours.

There are no specific preventive measures.