

“Is Hepatitis Airborne?”

Attitudes, Beliefs and Other Misconceptions
Discovered from Formative Research
and Message Testing

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Research Purpose

CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) conducted formative research to:

- Explore hepatitis related attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs held among certain segments of the general population
- Test educational messages and materials
- Begin planning for an broad based awareness campaign

Formative Research Methods

- Method: Focus Groups
- Conducted Fall October/November 2009
- Sample: Participants recruited by professional focus group facilities
- 3 cities (*Boston, Chicago, Houston*)
- 4 Audience Segments - 16 groups total
 - *General population*
 - *Asian Americans*
 - *African Americans*
 - *Gay and bisexual men*

Inclusion Criteria

- Male/Female aged 30-60
- High school education or above
- Ethnicity
 - African American, Asian, Hispanic or Caucasian
- No major illnesses or liver disease
- Have health insurance and primary care physician
- Additional criteria:
 - Sexually active
 - Identify as a Gay/Bisexual Man

Topics Discussed

Exploration of hepatitis

- What is it?
- What causes it?
- Ways to prevent it?
- How would someone know they have it?
- Any particular groups at risk for hepatitis?

Reactions to specific CDC materials and messages

- Hepatitis A, B, C, & audience specific

Group Characteristics

	General Population	Asian	African American	Gay/Bi Sexual Men
Cities	Chicago Boston	Chicago Boston	Chicago Houston	Houston Boston
Groups/ Participants	4 groups n=36	4 groups n=28	4 groups n=35	4 groups n=20
Group Composition	31-59 yrs 44% male	31-60 yrs 50% male	31-56 yrs 44% male	34-63 yrs 100% male
Ethnicity	Mixed ethnicities	Mixed Asian ethnicities 58% non-US born	African American	Mixed ethnicities

Findings

General Awareness

- Belief that if hepatitis was important, then people would hear more about it
 - It would be more prominent in news
 - There would be public education campaigns
- Cities with HAV associated outbreaks – some recollection
- No mention of healthcare-related outbreaks
- CDC - well known and high credibility

Knowledge Levels

- Knowledge levels generally low
- Some awareness that different types of hepatitis existed
- Little to no understanding of the differences between types

Hepatitis – In Their Words

Death

HIV

Tattoos

Yellow
Eyes

Airborne

Jaundice

Sexual

Blood borne

Virus

Breathing
Problems

Hereditary

SCARY!

Bacteria

Alcohol

LIVER
DISEASE

Cold sore

Needles

What Causes Hepatitis?

- *“Airborne”*
- *“Bacteria”*
- *“Virus”*
- *“Hereditary”*
- *“Shooting up”*
- *“Bad food”*
- *“Can it be caused by sex?”*

How do you Prevent it?

- *“Cleanliness”*
- *“Washing hands”*
- *“Don’t share needles”*
- *“Educating yourself about what to do”*
- *“I think you can get a shot for it??”*

Knowledge about Symptoms

General knowledge about symptoms was very misinformed

- Symptoms = infection
- Symptoms were “yellow eyes”
- No symptoms means no disease
- No symptoms means the disease is not detectable (even in blood tests)

Any Particular Groups at Risk?

- Lack of general knowledge carried over to knowledge of risk factors
- Answers varied from unsure, “other” people, risk groups overlapping with HIV
- Little consistency across groups

How Would a Person Know they were Infected with Hepatitis?

Perceptions of personal risk were low *BUT*

- Little knowledge of the disease or risk factors
- People assumed they were being tested
- They used symptoms as an indicator

And some participants may be low risk



“I would imagine that—and I hope that it’s tested regularly in the physicals.”



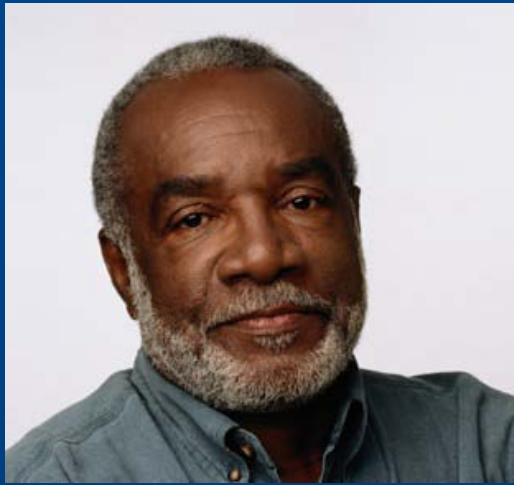
“I think.. if you get a physical, every year when they do your blood test they should check.”

What Happens if Someone Has It?

- Perceived as “less serious” than HIV or cancer
- Hepatitis A is the least serious, then B, then C
(Progresses from A to B to C)



*“A is pretty light...;
B is middle;
C is very serious”*



*“People don’t seem to die from it.
It’s not cancer or heart attack.”*

Vaccines

- No real concern about vaccine safety
- Open and willing to get vaccinated as adults
- Some confusion about whether or not they have been vaccinated
- Major question - how long does the vaccine last?

Group Specific Findings

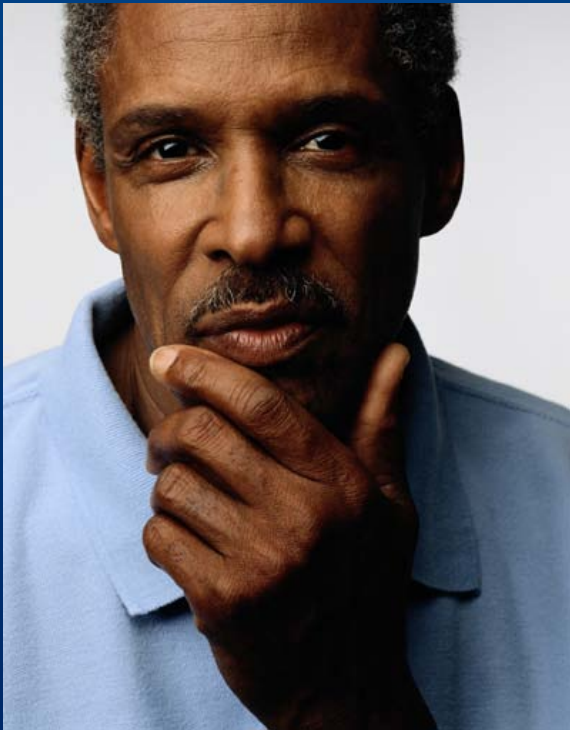
African American

- Noted the lack of public information about hepatitis, especially anything targeting African Americans
- Largely unaware that Hepatitis C disproportionately affects their community





“I don’t really believe that there is a group that would be more predisposed to the disease...I know African Americans have a lot more risk for most diseases than other races and I’ve heard that lots of different types of people have it.”



*“If it was folks in
our community
we should hear more about it.”*

Asian

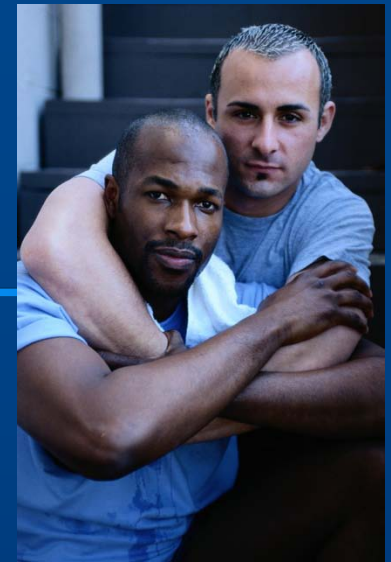


- Generally low perceptions of risk despite group demographics
- Reluctance to see Asians as a risk group
- Disliked the Asians images on the fact sheet – “everyone is at risk”
- CDC had high credibility



“It says people born in Asia, Africa... I disagree with that because this can happen in any country, any region – So I say people from anywhere can have this disease.”

Gay/Bisexual Men



- Perhaps the most knowledgeable of the groups
- Familiar with the risk for Hepatitis A and B for gay men
- Risk was associated with young gay men
- Expected the condom message – almost losing the “get vaccinated” message
- Appreciated gay specific content, but valued general content as well

General Population

- General awareness and knowledge of hepatitis low
- Mothers tended to be most aware of the vaccines
- General population groups were among the most opinionated about risk groups



Who's at Risk?

- *“people who do not practice birth control”*
- *“prostitutes”*
- *“musicians and bands...., the drug use”*
- *“people with tattoos”*
- *“certain cultures ... (with) sexually free lifestyle”*
- *“black race Hispanics”*
- *“certain lifestyle ... alcohol and drugs “*

Face of the Disease

Any guesses who?

Face of the Disease

Any guesses who?



The Hepatitis Language Clutter

HBV

ACUTE

viral hepatitis infection

HCV

VIRAL
hepatitis

INFECTION

DISEASE

CHRONIC

HAV

viral hepatitis infection

ACUTE
infection

CHRONIC
hepatitis



*“... it’s confusing
hepatitis B and chronic hepatitis B...
it’s caused by the same virus,
it’s just how long the infection is”*

Implications for Messaging for General Population

What Do We Call It?

- Referring to hepatitis simply as “hepatitis” with an occasional descriptor
 - viral hepatitis, chronic hepatitis, etc.
- For general awareness – may want to refer to the diseases as “hepatitis”
 - a broad umbrella term similar to “cancer”
- Condition is a proper noun for public education
 - “Hepatitis A – B - C”

Why Should the Public Care?

- Leading cause of liver cancer
- Millions of people have hepatitis – many don't know it
- Viral hepatitis is the most common blood-borne infection in the U.S.
- Hepatitis B is 50 – 100 times more infectious than HIV

What About Symptoms?

- Many people do not have symptoms
- Blood tests can detect the virus even without symptoms
- Symptoms include: (more than “yellow eyes”)
- Symptoms can take up to 30 years to develop
- Liver damage can be “silently” occurring even without symptoms

But I've Been Tested, Right?

- Regular physical exams/blood tests do not include tests for hepatitis
- Many people at risk don't get tested
- Most people with hepatitis are unaware they have it

So Who Is at Risk?

Chronic viral hepatitis can affect anyone, but certain groups are disproportionately affected

- 1 in 12 Asian-Americans has chronic Hepatitis B
- 1 in 30 Baby Boomers are infected with chronic Hepatitis C
- Rates of Hepatitis C-related liver cancer are twice as high in African-Americans compared to whites

What about Vaccines?

- Separate discussions about chronic hepatitis from vaccine preventable disease –
it's confusing
- Target vaccine messages to specific audience segments

And Why Should I Be Tested?

- Testing can lead to early diagnosis and treatment
- Testing can save lives!
- Treatments are available that
 - reverse or delay the effects of liver damage
 - can eliminate the virus from the body

And then... There is Stigma

We all need to work to de-stigmatize the disease

- Perhaps the most challenging task
- “Normalize” the disease by finding multiple voices to speak out
- Emphasize that many people have hepatitis and no known risk factors
- Stimulate a dialogue among stakeholders about how to address stigma

Next Steps

- Use findings to plan additional research and interventions
- Formative research with health care providers
- Formative research with high risk groups
- Incorporate findings into existing and new CDC educational materials
- Continue campaign planning

Visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

HEPATITIS A

General Information

What is hepatitis?
"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis is most often caused by one of several viruses, such as hepatitis A virus, hepatitis B virus, or hepatitis C virus. Toxins, bacterial infections, certain drugs, and heavy alcohol use can also cause hepatitis.

What is hepatitis A?
Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease with mild to moderate symptoms that results from infection with the hepatitis A virus.

What is hepatitis?

"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, certain medications, bacterial infections, and some diseases can cause hepatitis. Hepatitis also refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. These are three different, contagious liver diseases caused by three different viruses, although all three types of hepatitis can cause similar symptoms. They have different modes of transmission.

VIRAL HEPATITIS

Information for Gay and Bisexual Men

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get some people are at higher risk than others.

Are gay and bisexual men at risk for viral hepatitis?
Yes, it is estimated that among adults:
• 10% of men have hepatitis A virus infections, and
• 20% of men have hepatitis B virus infections.
Gay and bisexual men are at higher risk for hepatitis B and hepatitis C if they are in high-risk behaviors. Share or other exposures to blood or other body fluids that contain hepatitis B or hepatitis C. Of people with hepatitis C, 50% have been exposed to blood from someone who has hepatitis C virus. Many people who are HIV positive are also at higher risk for hepatitis C virus.

HEPATITIS B

General Information

What is hepatitis?

"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis is most often caused by one of several viruses, such as hepatitis A virus, hepatitis B virus, or hepatitis C virus. Toxins, bacterial infections, certain drugs, and heavy alcohol use can also cause hepatitis.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis B virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness with a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness. Hepatitis B can be "acute" or "chronic".
Acute hepatitis B virus infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the hepatitis B virus. Acute infection can — but does not always — lead to chronic hepatitis B virus infection. A long-term illness that occurs when the hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body.

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated.

How common is hepatitis B in the United States?

The number of acute hepatitis B virus infections in the United States each year, with an estimated 46,000 new infections, has declined in recent years. Experts believe this decline is a result of widespread vaccination of children. However, up to 1.4 million people in the United States have hepatitis B, many of whom are unaware of their infection.

How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone else through sexual contact, sharing needles, or sharing syringes.

CHRONIC HEPATITIS B

Information on Testing



What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease with the hepatitis B virus. Some people develop an acute, or short-term, chronic, or long-term, illness.

How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is usually spread when someone who is not infected with the virus has contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person; an infected mother; sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; or sharing personal items such as razors or toothbrushes.

Up to 1.4 million people in the United States have hepatitis B. Most are unaware of their infection.

Why is chronic hepatitis B a concern?

As shown in the map below, worldwide, most people who have the virus at birth or during early childhood will develop chronic hepatitis B.

Who should be tested for hepatitis B?

Testing for hepatitis B is recommended for:

- People who are at high risk for hepatitis B
- People who are at high risk for hepatitis B
- People who are at high risk for hepatitis B

Recommendations for Routine Testing and Follow-up for Chronic Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Infection

Population	Testing	Recommendation	
		Vaccination	Follow-up
Persons born in regions of high and intermediate HBV endemicity (HBV prevalence >2%)	Test for HBV, regardless of vaccination status in their country of origin, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — immigrants — adoptees — internationally adopted children 	If HBV positive, refer for medical management, vaccine if indicated.	If HBV positive, refer for medical management, vaccine if indicated.
US-born persons not vaccinated as infants whose parents were born in regions with high HBV endemicity (>8%)	Test for HBV regardless of maternal HBV status if not vaccinated as infants in the United States.	If HBV positive, refer for medical management, vaccine if indicated.	If HBV positive, refer for medical management, vaccine if indicated.

Geographic Distribution of Chronic HBV Infection — Worldwide, 2006*



* For regions, countries, and areas of prevalence of hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) in persons aged 15 years and older, see www.cdc.gov/hepatitis. For more information on hepatitis B, visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis. © 2006 CDC. All rights reserved. CDC is not responsible for reproduction of this document. Reproduction of this document is permitted for non-commercial use only.

Reference for Interpretation of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

If Your HCV Test Result Is:			Interpretation	
Anti HCV Screening Test*	Anti-HCV Supplemental Test RIBA†	HCV RNA	Anti HCV	HCV Infection
Negative	Not Needed	Not Needed	Negative	None
Positive	Not Done	Not Done	Not Known	Not Known
Positive	Not Done	Negative	Not Known	Not Known*
Positive (high titer ratio)	Not Done	Not Done	Positive	Past/Current
Positive	Negative	Not Needed	Negative	None
Positive	Positive	Not Done	Positive	Past/Current
Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive	Past/Current*
Positive	Positive/Not Done	Positive	Positive	Current
Positive	Indeterminate	Not Done	Indeterminate	Not Known
Positive	Indeterminate	Positive	Positive	Current
Positive	Indeterminate	Negative	Indeterminate	Not Known*

* EIA (enzyme immunoassay) or CIA (enhanced chemiluminescence immunoassay).
† RIBA (recombinant immunoblot assay), a more specific anti-HCV assay.
* Single negative HCV RNA result cannot determine infection status, as persons might have intermittent viremia.
* Samples with high signal-to-cut-off ratios usually (>50%) confirm positive, but supplemental serologic testing was not performed. Less than 5 of every 100 might represent false positives; more specific testing should be requested, if indicated.
Anti-HCV, antibody to HCV.
RIBA, RIBA (recombinant immunoblot assay).

HEPATITIS C

General Information



What is hepatitis?

"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, certain medications, some diseases, and viral infections can cause hepatitis. Hepatitis is most often caused by one of several viruses, such as hepatitis A virus, hepatitis B virus, or hepatitis C virus.

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis C virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness that damages the liver. Hepatitis C can be either "acute" or "chronic".

Acute hepatitis C virus infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the hepatitis C virus. Acute infection can — but does not always — lead to chronic hepatitis C virus infection. A long-term illness that occurs when the hepatitis C virus remains in a person's body.

What is hepatitis?

"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Toxins, certain drugs, and viral infections can all cause hepatitis. Hepatitis also refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. Acute hepatitis also refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. Acute hepatitis can be either "acute" or "chronic".

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis B virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness. Hepatitis B can be either "acute" or "chronic".

Hepatitis B virus infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the hepatitis B virus. Acute infection can — but does not always — lead to chronic hepatitis B virus infection. A long-term illness that occurs when the hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body.

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated.

Hepatitis B spread?
It is usually spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid from someone who is not infected with the hepatitis B virus comes in contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person; sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; or from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid from someone who is not infected with the hepatitis B virus comes in contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person; sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; or from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid from someone who is not infected with the hepatitis B virus comes in contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person; sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; or from an infected mother to her baby at birth.



Many people have hepatitis
and don't know it.



SEX "PROTECTION"
DRUGS ROCK 'N' ROLL
WHO KNEW
COULD BE THIS EASY?

ROCK 'N' ROLL MIGHT
BUT SOME THINGS
HEPATITIS
IS ONE OF THEM.

If you have injected drugs—
you could be at risk for hep

Hepatitis is a serious liver disease that
can be spread through sex with an
infected person. Men who have sexual
contact with other men are at increased
risk for both hepatitis A and B. But
protecting yourself is easy.

1 in 12 Asian Americans
has chronic hepatitis B.
Talk to your doctor about
getting tested.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Viral Hepatitis



www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

Image courtesy of Bill Steiner

HIV
Syphilis
Chlamydia
Gonorrhea
Herpes
Hepatitis B
Hepatitis A
Hepatitis C
Hepatitis D
Hepatitis E
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Hepatitis G
Hepatitis H
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Hepatitis B

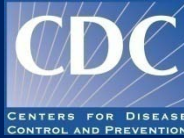
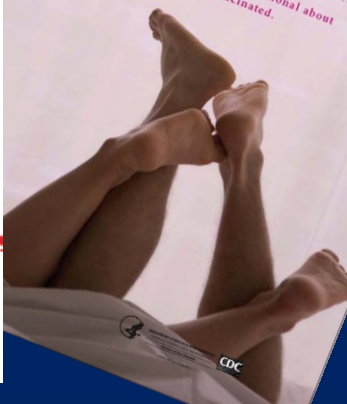
Did you
can b

Nothing could
ruin this moment.

Except hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease. And it's spread by sexual contact with
an infected person. You can protect yourself against the STD
getting vaccinated.

Talk to your health professional about



Thank You

For More Information

www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

Email: CJorgensen@cdc.gov