

HEPATITIS E ALERT

Information for NSW General Practitioners

Please distribute this information to all staff

Key points for GPs:

1. Previously, hepatitis E was only considered a risk for international travellers, but there is now evidence that hepatitis E can be locally acquired.
2. Hepatitis E is an illness that presents similarly to hepatitis A.
3. Consider hepatitis E in your diagnosis of acute viral hepatitis, irrespective of an overseas travel history.

Hepatitis E in Australia:

- Until recently, hepatitis E was only considered a risk for travellers to countries where the virus is endemic.
- In 2014 (year to date), there have been 27 notifications of hepatitis E virus (HEV), many without a history of overseas travel.
- Locally acquired cases have reported eating Australian produced pork liver, liver pâté or liver sausage.
- Consumption of undercooked pork products may be a source of hepatitis E infection in Australia.

Risk factors for hepatitis E?

- Travel to developing countries. Hepatitis E prevalence is highest in East and South Asia.
- People who consume undercooked pork, particularly pork liver.

How does hepatitis E present?

- The clinical presentation of hepatitis E virus is similar to hepatitis A.
- Symptoms include anorexia, nausea, vomiting, right upper quadrant pain, fever, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice. Some people can have very mild symptoms.
- Most people will clear the virus and recover completely. There is no specific treatment.
- People with immunocompromising conditions such as solid-organ transplant-recipients, those with pre-existing liver disease and pregnant women have a greater risk of severe disease.

Who should I test for hepatitis E infection?

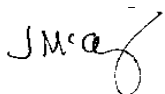
- Consider testing patients with acute viral hepatitis who:
 - have travelled to a hepatitis E endemic country, or
 - have eaten undercooked pork products, or
 - have no alternate diagnosis (negative tests for hepatitis A, B and C, EBV and CMV).
- Serology for hepatitis E IgM and IgG should be requested from your usual pathology service. Please include relevant clinical and travel information on your pathology request form.

How should I educate patients?

- Hepatitis E can be spread by the faecal oral route.
- Tell your hepatitis E patients:
 - to wash their hands thoroughly, and
 - not to prepare food or drink for other people, provide health care to others, share eating or drinking utensils with others, share linen and towels with others, swim or use hot tubs, or have sex while infectious (for at least 2 weeks after onset of symptoms).
- All people should be advised to follow good food-hygiene practices as well as thoroughly cooking pork before consumption.

For further information:

- See NSW Health website: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/hepatitise.aspx>
- Contact your local public health unit on **1300 066 055**



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