

Hepatitis D

Hepatitis D virus (HDV) infections occur only in those who are infected with HBV. The dual infection of HDV and HBV can result in a more serious disease and worse outcome. Safe and effective hepatitis B vaccines provide protection from HDV infection.

Hepatitis D virus infection is transmitted by blood and blood products. The risk factors for infection are similar to those for Hepatitis B virus infection. The Hepatitis D virus most often infects intravenous drug users.

A patient can acquire Hepatitis D virus infection at the same time as he/she is infected with the Hepatitis B virus. This is called co-infection. A patient with Hepatitis B can be infected with Hepatitis D virus at any time after acute Hepatitis B virus infection. This is called super-infection.

Hepatitis D virus super- infection should be suspected in a patient with chronic Hepatitis B whose condition suddenly worsens. There is usually an obvious history of continued exposure to blood or blood products. A particularly aggressive acute Hepatitis B infection could suggest Hepatitis D co- infection. Interferon-alpha is used to treat patients with chronic Hepatitis B and Hepatitis D infection. Some studies have suggested that a dose higher than that usually used for Hepatitis B infection may be beneficial.

Source: <http://www.who.int/features/qa/76/en/>

Questions: (Express your ideas)

1. How does Hepatitis D spread? Explain your answer.
2. What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis D?
3. Who are at increased risk of Hepatitis D infection?
4. What should you do if you have been exposed to Hepatitis D?
5. How should we prevent Hepatitis D?