To protect yourself from hepatitis A and E infection:

• Wash hands well before cooking and eating, and after using the toilet.
• Eat freshly cooked food, avoid raw fruit or vegetables that cannot be peeled.
• Drink boiled or purified water
• Get vaccinated for hepatitis A (but this does not protect against hepatitis E).

To protect yourself from hepatitis B and C:

• Get vaccinated for hepatitis B (but this does not protect against hepatitis C)
• Use condoms during sexual intercourse
• Do not share toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers.
• If you get tattooed or your body pierced, ensure that the tools used are sterilized before each use.
• Never share drugs, needles, syringes.

There is no drug to treat hepatitis A and E, and treatment is focused on the symptoms and any complication that may occur.

There is no cure for hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B can be treated with drugs, including interferon and anti-viral agents. Patients should follow the advice of their physicians.

For hepatitis C treatment, the standard drugs are Peginterferon and ribavirin.

Care is aimed at maintaining comfort and adequate nutritional balance, including replacement of fluids that are lost from vomiting and diarrhoea.

How can I protect myself from viral hepatitis?

What is the treatment for viral hepatitis?
What is viral hepatitis?

Viral hepatitis is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. Four types of viruses are the most commonly responsible for viral hepatitis infection – hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and hepatitis E. All these viruses can cause serious disease, and it can take months to recover completely from viral hepatitis. It can also lead to complications such as chronic liver disease, liver failure and liver cancer.

How does viral hepatitis spread?

Hepatitis A and E are spread through contaminated food and fluid. Some common ways in which the virus spreads includes:

- Eating or drinking contaminated food or fluid.
- Sharing contaminated eating utensils.
- Household contact with an infected person.
- Sexual contact with an infected person.

Hepatitis B is spread through contact with infected blood and other bodily fluids, such as semen, vaginal fluids or saliva. Some common routes of transmission of hepatitis B include:

- sexual contact with an infected person without the use of condoms.
- sharing of needles when injecting drugs.
- Exposure to needlesticks or ‘sharps’ on the job.
- Having a tattoo done with a contaminated tool.
- Sharing toothbrushes, razors, or tools for manicure, which many have tiny amounts of blood in them.
- From an infected mother to a child during birth.

Hepatitis C transmission mostly occurs through infected blood and blood products.

What are the signs and symptoms of viral hepatitis?

Viral hepatitis is characterized by:

- Yellow colouration of the skin and eyes (called ‘jaundice’)
- Fever
- Enlarged liver
- Abdominal pain