

Get tested if at risk of hepatitis infection

Anyone who thinks they may be at risk from hepatitis B or C infection is reminded to get tested. Hepatitis B and C viruses can remain undetected in the body for a long time and can cause severe liver disease many years after infection.

How is hepatitis transmitted?

Viral [hepatitis](#) is a group of infectious diseases known as hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E. Although not very common in Northern Ireland, it is estimated 400 million people across the globe are infected.

The two main types of hepatitis are B and C. Both of these are spread by contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. They can cause liver cirrhosis and cancer.

[Hepatitis B](#) can be passed on:

- through having unprotected sex
- from mother to baby
- from contact with infected blood in areas of the world where hepatitis B is more common

[Hepatitis C](#) is more commonly associated with sharing needles or equipment for injecting drugs. It can also be spread by having had a tattoo or body piercing using non-sterile equipment.

Neither virus is easily spread through day-to-day contact. You cannot get hepatitis B or C by shaking hands, coughing, sneezing, sharing food, or by using the same toilet.

People are encouraged to come forward for testing if they have ever injected drugs, including steroids or tanning products, even if it was only once or some time ago.

Avoiding infection

It is important to know how to avoid becoming infected with hepatitis. This includes:

- practising safer sex
- avoiding getting tattoos abroad
- not sharing personal materials that may come into contact with blood (for example, needles, razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers)

Injecting equipment can be obtained from various needle exchange sites across

Northern Ireland to reduce the risk from these infections.

Treatment

Treatments are getting better all the time, so it is worth knowing if you have been infected. It is also important to protect your family if you are infected.

The treatments for hepatitis C are now so good they can cure nearly 100 per cent of cases. If you're treated straight away, not only can you prevent your liver becoming damaged, but you can reduce the chance of spreading the disease to others.

So, if you think you may have been exposed to the virus, even if this was many years ago, talk to [your GP](#) or nurse and get tested.

More useful links

[Child safety on farms](#)

Farms can be one of the most dangerous 'playgrounds' for children, particularly during the summer months. Farming families and visitors are being reminded to be extra careful.

Increased risks

The summer poses increased risks to children, as they typically spend more time on the farm during what is a very busy and potentially hazardous period. Various contractors may be on site operating potentially dangerous vehicles and machinery.

Some of the main risks include:

- moving vehicles such as tractors, quads and harvesters
- farm animals
- infectious diseases
- harmful substances
- slurry tanks and slurry gas
- falling objects

You can find out more about farm safety, with further links through to relevant information, on the pages below:

Farm safety checklist for parents

As a parent:

- do you have a safe and secure play area for young children?
- do you prevent children from playing in or around farmyards and livestock?
- do you prevent all children under 13 years from riding on tractors and farm machinery?
- do you restrict the use of the quad to people over 16 who are properly trained and have the suitable safety equipment?
- do you secure all heavy wheels, gates, heavy equipment and stacked materials to prevent them from toppling over?
- is your slurry lagoon securely fenced to prevent children from gaining access and do you make sure tank covers are always in place?
- do you always keep children well away when mixing slurry?
- do you keep track of where family members are playing or working and when they are expected back?
- do you make sure everyone washes their hands before eating and drinking?
- do you keep chemicals locked in a secure store when not in use?
- do you make sure that guards are in place to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery?
- have you made sure all family members know what to do in an emergency?
- have you prepared a list of emergency contact telephone numbers?

If children are old enough, tell them about the dangers they should look out, where they are not allowed to go, and encourage them to be responsible.

You can find more information about child safety on farms on the [Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland website](#).

Farm Secure app

The Farm Secure app provides an interesting and engaging way for parents and children to learn about the many dangers on farms and how to stay safe all year round.

Children can download the app from the App store, where they can take a quiz on farm safety, compare their scores with others on the leaderboard, and watch a number of farm safety videos on issues such as slurry, machinery, farm animals, and bugs and germs.

More useful links

Making farms safer places to work and live

Deaths or injuries on farms happen much more often than they should. Farmers are asked to think safety before starting any job to help make farms safer places to work and live.

Preventing accidents

From quad bike accidents to animal attacks, farming kills and injures more people than any other industry in the UK and Ireland.

Tragically, most accidents are caused by simple factors such as habit, haste, fatigue, and improperly-maintained machinery.

Many farmers think 'farm safety last' rather than 'farm safety first' but most farming accidents are avoidable.

Safety must never be an afterthought. By taking just a few minutes to think about the job ahead, preventable accidents can be easily avoided by using simple safety practices.

Machinery

Poorly used or faulty machinery is a major cause of death and injury on farms.

Farmers come into contact with a host of machinery daily such as tractors, combines, choppers and hay balers which can bring dangers.

People can be injured by front-end loaders, falling from a moving tractor, or being struck by its wheels.

Also, hands, hair and clothing can be caught by unguarded PTO shafts or other unguarded moving parts such as pulleys and belts.

The following should help you and others to stay safe on your farm:

- keep all guards in place on tractors and equipment, especially PTO guards
- make sure that all mirrors and cameras (if fitted) are clean and fully functional on tractors and telescopic handlers
- make sure equipment is stopped fully before clearing blockages
- operate tractors with enclosed safety cabs or roll bars
- take care when mounting or dismounting tractors or telescopic handlers
- keep the brakes on all your machines properly maintained, especially the parking brakes
- only start your tractor from the driver's seat

- make sure that your tractors starter system works properly
- when pulling heavy machinery equipped with hydraulic brakes, make sure the brakes are connected to the tractor and work properly

You should:

- never try to repair machinery if you do not have the correct tools and equipment, and are not competent to do so
- never run a tractor down a slope to start it
- never work near overhead power lines when tipping trailers or using high reaching machinery
- never check hydraulic pipes for leaks by running your finger or hand along them while they are connected and under pressure

Farmers are encouraged to take the appropriate steps before doing any repair work on machinery.

The correct equipment must always be used for the job; this includes wheel chocks and a trolley jack or suitable props. Farmers should also consider employing a competent mechanic to carry out repairs.

Animals

Many farmers never stop to consider why animals behave as they do and, more importantly, what this behaviour could mean to their personal safety.

Livestock can be unpredictable, something that even the most experienced farmer can't completely plan for.

Handling livestock always involves a risk of injury, and this is increased when an animal becomes frightened or has been startled.

Animals will fiercely defend their food, shelter, territory and young. When frightened or in pain, animals may react in ways that threaten your safety as well as their own.

Although most animal incidents are not fatal, many men, women and children are needlessly injured every year due to a lack of safety awareness.

It's important to stress that safe handling equipment is a must, not a luxury.

Falls

Farming carries an above-average risk of falling accidents. Any fall from height can lead to long-term injuries or sadly even death.

Most accidents of this type happen either because the work is not properly planned, the risks are not recognised, proper precautions are not taken, or the equipment used is either defective, not appropriate, or used incorrectly.

While working at heights is always a risky business, there are several things

which can be done to reduce those risks. The following checklist can help prevent falls from heights:

- have you thought about the best way to get up to the job?
- can you use a cherry-picker or a materials handler (including a fork lift)?
- do you have a suitable cage or platform attached to the machine?
- have you done everything you can to avoid using a ladder?
- is the ladder in good condition, rungs and stiles sound?
- is it long enough, reaches to at least 0.9m above the stepping off point?
- can it be tied or footed?
- is the roof material fragile, for example asbestos cement sheet?
- have you got crawling boards or staging to cover the asbestos cement by bridging the joists?
- can you avoid stepping on the roof-lights?

Remember: you can either fall off or through the roof of a farm building.

More farm safety information

You can find out more about farm safety on the links below:

Always take your time to think about what you are doing, as making a few simple checks could actually save a life – maybe your own.

More useful links

[Avoiding getting caught out by scams](#)

It's Scams Awareness Month and people are being warned to beware of being caught out by fraudsters. There are countless ways that criminals have found to scam people out of their money, but there are steps to take to be wiser about scams.

Do some research

New technology has made scamming a fine art. Telephones, smartphones, computers, and tablets has inspired a new generation of scammers from home and abroad.

People need to be much more careful. Just as the internet is used to search for products and services, people should use the internet to:

- research the seller or provider
- check reviews and scam alerts from those who have already been caught

out

It is one of the easiest ways of protecting yourself.

Scams and what to do

Each month Trading Standards Service's [Consumerline](#) receives hundreds of complaints, many from people who have been scammed from a few pounds to many thousands of pounds.

For example:

- phone calls catch the unwary who are frequently too quick to agree business over the phone
- instead of being given money, some consumers have lost hundreds of pounds applying for loans
- fake websites supposedly selling cars and even outboard motors have caught local consumers out in recent weeks

Lots of people also fall for 'free trials' of various lotions and potions. Thinking they have paid only a few pounds for post and packaging, they discover that they have had sometimes hundreds of pounds withdrawn from their account under a Continuous Payment Authority. In many cases, goods are simply never delivered.

Anyone who feels that they have been a victim of a scam should [contact Consumerline](#).

Report a scam

Many people who are scammed feel they are to blame to falling for it, but it's not their fault.

If you have – or know someone who has – been a victim of fraud, no matter how small, you should report it to the [PSNI](#) or [Action Fraud](#).

Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

More useful links

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[**Physical activity advice for pregnant**](#)

women

If you are pregnant, there is new advice about the types of physical activity that are safe to do while you're expecting. Taking part in safe, responsible and appropriate physical activity while pregnant can have many health benefits.

Addressing health concerns

The new recommendations aim to address concerns around obesity, diabetes and other health issues during pregnancy.

Research shows that taking regular physical exercise during pregnancy can:

- boost the immune system
- help prevent health risks such as Type 2 diabetes
- improve mental health and wellbeing

If you are pregnant you should listen to your body and adapt your exercise accordingly.

As a general rule, if it feels pleasant, keep going; if it is uncomfortable, then stop and seek advice from your health professional.

If you are already active then try to keep up your physical activity levels.

You may need to adapt your activity throughout your pregnancy. For example, replacing contact sports with a non-contact sport or an appropriate exercise class – 'don't bump the bump'.

There is no evidence of harm for expectant mother or baby resulting from moderate intensity physical activity.

If you weren't active before pregnancy, it is recommended you slowly increase the amount of exercise you do. Begin with 10-minute bouts of moderate-intensity exercise, gradually building up to 150 minutes in total spread throughout the week. It is important to remember that 'every activity counts'.

If you were not active before your pregnancy you should avoid intense exercise, such as:

- running
- jogging
- racquet sports
- strenuous strength training

Activities to avoid

If pregnant you should avoid activities where there is an increased risk of

falling, trauma or high impact injuries. These include:

- skiing
- water skiing
- surfing
- off-road cycling
- gymnastics
- horse riding
- contact sports, such as ice hockey, boxing, football or basketball

After the first trimester of your pregnancy you are also discouraged from exercise that requires lying flat on your back.

Medical advice

You should seek medical advice if you experience:

- breathlessness before or following mild exercise
- headaches
- dizziness
- chest pain
- muscle weakness affecting balance
- calf pain or swelling

If you experience pregnancy complications such as vaginal bleeding, regular painful contractions, or amniotic fluid leakage, you may also be advised to reduce or stop physical activity.

More useful links

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