



## Hepatitis C

### What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus. Hepatitis C can be a short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic) illness.

### What is the difference between short-term and long-term Hepatitis C?

Short-term (acute) Hepatitis C causes sickness within 6 months of being exposed. For unknown reasons, 15-25% of people get better on their own without any treatment. Around 75-85% of people who get Hepatitis C virus go on to have long-term Hepatitis C.

Long-term (chronic) Hepatitis C is an illness that occurs when the Hepatitis C virus remains in the body. It can lead to problems like liver damage, liver scarring, liver failure or liver cancer. Over 3 million Americans have chronic Hepatitis C.

### How is Hepatitis C Spread?

Hepatitis C is passed from person to person through blood. Most people get Hepatitis C by sharing needles or other items used to inject drugs. Before blood banks began to check all donors in 1992, Hepatitis C was also spread through getting blood and organ transplants.

### Can Hepatitis C be spread through sex?

Yes, but how often Hepatitis C is spread through sex is unknown. Having a sexually transmitted disease (STD), having more than one sex partner and having rough sex can increase the chance of getting Hepatitis C.

### Can a person get Hepatitis C from a tattoo or piercing?

Yes, a person can get Hepatitis C from tattoos or piercings when they are given using tools that are not clean. Only get tattoos and piercings from artists with a license from the health department.



## What are the symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Many people who have Hepatitis C feel fine and do not know they have it. If people do start to feel sick, it can take weeks or years. Signs of sickness for both short-term and long-term Hepatitis C can include:

- Fever
- Always feeling tired
- Not wanting to eat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark urine (pee)
- Grey-colored stools (poop)
- Joint pain
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)

## Can I prevent myself from getting Hepatitis C?

Yes, you can keep yourself from getting or giving Hepatitis C in many ways:

- Do not share needles
- Do not share items that might have blood on them, even in a tiny amount, like a toothbrush, razors, nail clippers or blood testing machine
- Only get tattoos or piercings from a shop with an up-to-date license

## How do I know if I have Hepatitis C?

A doctor can tell you if you have Hepatitis C after taking a blood test.

## Who should get tested for Hepatitis C?

People should get tested if they:

- Inject drugs or used to inject drugs, even if it was only once or was many years ago
- Have HIV
- Have liver tests that are not normal or have liver disease
- Were given blood or had an organ transplant before 1992
- Have been exposed to blood on the job by a needle stick or cut with a sharp object
- Are on dialysis

## How is Hepatitis C treated?

Short-term Hepatitis C is not usually caught and tends to clear up without treatment. When it is caught, physicians recommend plenty of rest, eating healthy, drinking lots of fluids and they may prescribe medication.

Chronic Hepatitis C is treated sometimes but not always. People with long-term Hepatitis C should go to the doctor often to see if they have liver disease. To protect your liver, do not drink alcohol.

## Is there a vaccine for Hepatitis C?

No, there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C but there are vaccines for Hepatitis types A and B. If you have Hepatitis C you should get the vaccine for types A and B to help protect your liver.

## For more information:

Call Huron County Public Health at 419-668-1652 or visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)

