



Hepatitis **C**

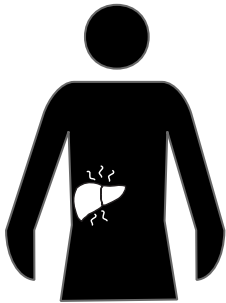
Hepatitis is a disease in which the liver becomes irritated or damaged. There are many causes of hepatitis, including hepatitis C (formerly known as non-A, non-B hepatitis).

Hepatitis C is caused by a virus that is carried in blood. Most people with hepatitis C can carry the virus in their blood for years. People who are chronically infected with the hepatitis C virus become carriers. Although hepatitis C carriers may not look or feel sick, they can infect other people. They can also develop severe liver problems at a later date. Hepatitis C is diagnosed through a blood test.

Hepatitis C is similar to hepatitis B because these forms of hepatitis are usually spread by contaminated blood or by sexual activity. Hepatitis C is different from hepatitis A, which is spread from feces to mouth and is usually not such a severe illness.

Usual symptoms of hepatitis C

Most people who have hepatitis C have mild or no symptoms and are leading normal lives. But they can still pass the virus on to others. Eventually they may develop symptoms of severe liver disease. Someone with hepatitis C can have **some, all, or none** of the following symptoms:



- tiredness and weakness
- loss of appetite
- abdominal pain, especially around the liver (see diagram)
- nausea and vomiting
- fever, chills
- muscle/joint aches
- dark urine
- yellow color (jaundice) of the skin or white part of the eyes
- diarrhea or light-colored bowel movements

How hepatitis C is spread

People at risk include injection drug users, anyone who has had a blood transfusion before July 1992, hemodialysis patients, those with tattoos and those with multiple sex partners. Body-piercing and cocaine snorting are also risk factors. However, in 10% or more of people with hepatitis C, the source is unknown.

You can catch hepatitis C from:

- sharing needles or syringes
- having sex with an infected partner (suspected but not proven)
- sharing tattoo and acupuncture needles, if not properly sterilized

You cannot catch hepatitis C by sneezing, coughing, hugging, or other casual contact.

<u>Common ways to catch viral hepatitis</u>			
Hepatitis	A	B	C
Contaminated food/water	■		
Feces to hands/mouth	■		
Family members	■	■	S
Mother to infant		■	S
SEX - vaginal		■	S
SEX - oral/anal	■	■	
NEEDLES - drug use with shared needles	R	■	■
NEEDLES - medical use, accidental		■	■
NEEDLES - body piercing or tattoo		■	■
Blood products	R	■	■

■ Confirmed transmission
 S Suspected but not proven
 R Rarely

Treatment of hepatitis C

If you have active hepatitis C infection, there may be treatments your doctor can give you that may help you get over the illness. It's very important to get medical advice if you have hepatitis C.

Ways to avoid hepatitis C

There is currently no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C. The only way to prevent this disease is to take certain precautions, which include:

Sterilize!

Needles and other instruments that penetrate the skin should be sterile. This includes needles used for tattoos, acupuncture and drugs. Dispose of all needles properly.

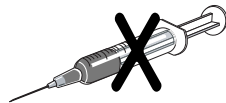
Avoid risky behavior!

If you have casual sex or inject drugs, you are taking a risk with your health.

To lower your risk, do the following



Use a condom during sex - every time! Limit number of sex partners.



Don't share needles if you inject drugs.



If you do share needles, clean them with bleach and water every time you use a needle.

**Your doctor needs to report hepatitis to
County Health Services to prevent
this disease from spreading throughout the community.**

**For more information or to report this illness,
call (619) 515-6620.**

