

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS C

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What Is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. When the liver is infected, it does not work as well as it should. Hepatitis C can spread from one person to another through blood or bodily fluids. You are at risk for hepatitis C if you:

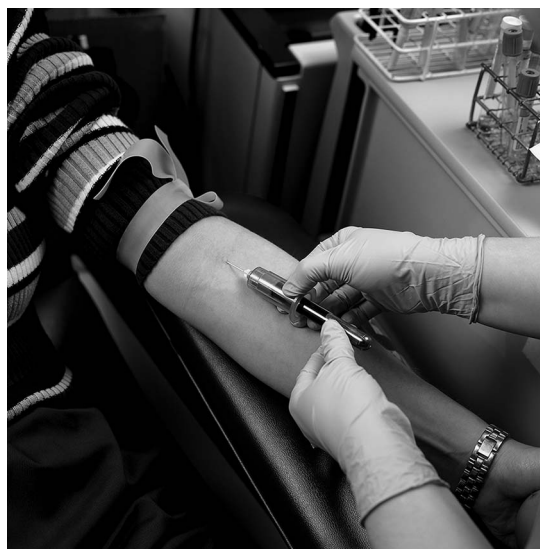
- Inject drugs
- Have had long-term kidney dialysis
- Are a health care worker who has been exposed to contaminated needles or sharps or has been exposed to bodily fluids
- Have HIV
- Are a man who has sex with other men
- Had a blood transfusion before 1992
- Were born between 1945 and 1965
- Were born to a mother with hepatitis C

Should I Be Screened?

- Testing for hepatitis C is very important. Hepatitis C may not cause any symptoms. Many people don't even know they have it.
- During testing, your health care provider will take a small blood sample to look test for hepatitis C.
- You should be tested for hepatitis C at least once if you have any of the risk factors listed above.
- You should be tested for hepatitis C once per year if you inject drugs or are an HIV-positive man who has sex with other men.

How Is It Treated?

- You should not drink alcohol if you have been diagnosed with hepatitis C. Alcohol can cause additional damage to your liver.
- There are newer medicines available for hepatitis C that are believed to cure the disease.
- Years of hepatitis C infection can cause liver damage. If your liver is very damaged, you may need a transplant. This requires a doctor to replace your damaged liver with a healthy one.



How Can I Prevent It From Spreading?

- If you inject drugs, ask about clean needle exchanges in your area.
- Only get a tattoo or piercing from a trustworthy business. The artist should use sterile needles, wash their hands before, and wear gloves during each session.
- Use condoms if you have sex with multiple partners.
- If you live with a person who has hepatitis C, don't share toothbrushes or razors.

Questions for My Doctor

- Should I be tested for hepatitis C?
- Can I still be infected if I do not feel sick?
- What treatment is best for me?
- What are the side effects of antiviral medicines for hepatitis C?
- Will these medicines cure my hepatitis C?
- What should I do to protect others from catching hepatitis C?
- What should I do if I cannot afford hepatitis C medicines?

For More Information



ACP

https://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/patients_families/products/facts/hepatitis_c.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/cfaq.htm