

# About Hepatitis C



## What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by a virus which can remain in your body for the rest of your life. Some people have no symptoms and do not get sick. Some people may get cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver which may cause liver failure. If that happens, the liver may not be able to do its usual jobs which are to:

- Help you fight infection.
- Help your blood clot when you are bleeding.
- Take wastes and poisons out of your blood

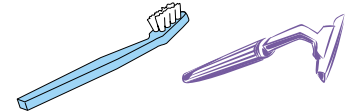
## How does hepatitis C spread?

It is spread when a person's blood or body fluids come in contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. Common ways in which hepatitis C is spread are:

- Getting blood or blood products (plasma, red cells) infected with hepatitis C or an organ donation from an infected person.
- Sharing needles with an infected person.

Rarely, hepatitis C may be spread by:

- Having sex with an infected person.
- Sharing razors or toothbrushes with an infected person.
- Being born to an infected mother.



Hepatitis C is **not** spread by:

- Shaking hands, hugging or kissing.
- Breast-feeding.
- Sharing food, silverware or drinking from the same glass.
- Coughing or sneezing.

## What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?

Most patients have no symptoms!

- During the first months of infection, some people notice:
  - feeling tired and weak
  - not wanting to eat
  - feeling sick to the stomach (nausea)
  - vomiting
  - fever
  - dark urine (pee)
  - the whites of the eyes and the skin may be yellow

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- After many months or years of infection some people may still have no symptoms. Some people may notice:
  - skin rashes
  - hurting in the joints
  - feeling tired
  - swelling of the legs or belly

### How is hepatitis C treated?

You can help take care of your liver by:

- Not drinking alcohol.
- Eating a healthy diet (check with a dietitian).
- Getting enough rest and sleep.
- Checking with your doctor **before** taking any medicines, herbs, or food supplements.
- Keeping your appointments and taking your medicine the right way.



In some cases of chronic infection, your doctor may have your blood checked to see if you should take an antiviral medicine. If your liver is badly damaged, you may need a liver transplant.

### What if I am pregnant?

- Most babies born to hepatitis C infected mothers do **not** become infected.
- Most of the babies who are infected at birth do not have any symptoms, and they may grow up without any hepatitis C problems.
- You should breast-feed your baby unless your nipples are cracked or bleeding.

### How can I keep from spreading hepatitis C?

- Do not share needles, razors, toothbrushes, etc. with anyone else.
- Do not donate blood, body organs or any other body parts or fluids.
- Keep any cuts and sores on your body covered with bandages.
- If you have more than one sex partner, have safe sex by using or having your partner use a condom.



### What other special things do I need to know?

- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B if your doctor finds that you do not already have antibodies to these viruses.
- There is no vaccine against hepatitis C.