

# Hepatitis C (HCV)

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis C virus. The infection can cause swelling and scarring of the liver. The illness can be mild in some people, while others can experience severe disease. Many people carry the infection in their blood for a life time. These people have chronic hepatitis C infection and are at risk of long-term liver problems.

## How is Hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C is spread through direct blood to blood contact and body fluids containing blood, of an infected person.

Situations that put you at higher risk of getting hepatitis C are:

- Sharing needles or syringes or other drug equipment such as cookers, cotton, water, crack pipes and straws for snorting
- Transfusions of blood or blood products prior to 1992
- Tattooing, piercing or acupuncture with non-sterile equipment
- Needle-stick injuries

Situations that put you at low risk of getting hepatitis C are:

- Sexual activity that includes contact with blood or exchange of blood
- Sharing personal items such as razors, nail clippers or toothbrushes with an infected person
- An expectant mother who has hepatitis C can infect her unborn baby

Hepatitis C is **NOT spread through** kissing, coughing, or sharing eating utensils.

## What are the symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Some people may have no symptoms at all, while others may have:

- Flu-like symptoms (fever, nausea, vomiting, body aches)
- Fatigue (tiredness, weakness)
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of appetite
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)
- Dark urine

## How is Hepatitis C diagnosed?

Hepatitis C can be diagnosed through a blood test. The blood test can be ordered by your health care provider.

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**How can the spread of Hepatitis C be prevented?**

- Do not share needles, syringes or other drug equipment
- Clean works are available at no cost from Superior Points by calling 625-8831, 625-7996 or 625-8830
- Do not share personal items such as razors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes
- Avoid blood to blood contact during sexual activity
- Adopt safe sex practices. Use condoms for oral, vaginal, and anal sex
- If you are getting a tattoo, body piercing or acupuncture make sure you choose a reputable service and make sure that only single-use, disposable needles are used and that all equipment is sterile
- Wear protective gloves if you are likely to be in contact with someone else's blood

**Important Points to Know/Remember**

- Have a confirmation test done
- Receive immunization against Hepatitis A & B
- There is no immunization for Hep C
- There is treatment for Hep C

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

**For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.**