

Hepatitis C is a virus that infects the liver.

The infection may be long-lasting in many people and can lead to damage of the liver. The liver is an important organ. It processes nutrients and medications, cleans the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is damaged, its ability to do its job can be affected. Hepatitis C results from infection with the hepatitis C virus. It can take up to 30 years to develop symptoms of liver damage from hepatitis C. During this time you might feel healthy. Hepatitis C can cause cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer. Around 16,000 people die every year from liver diseases related to hepatitis C.

How do people get hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is spread through direct contact with blood. It can be spread through:

- ☑ Injecting drugs and sharing needles or works
- ☑ Blood transfusions and organ transplants before 1992
- ☑ Sex – the risk through vaginal sex is low; the risk is higher with anal sex
- ☑ Sharing toothbrushes, razors, or nail clippers that may have blood on them
- ☑ An infected mother to her baby during delivery

Hepatitis C is not spread though sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.

Stop the spread.

- ⚠ If you use injection drugs do not share any needles or works. This includes cottons, cookers, ties, water, etc. Needle exchange services are available in Washington State.
- ⚠ Men who have sex with men, particularly if they are HIV positive, are at high risk of getting hepatitis C through sex. If you are a man who has sex with men, use condoms to avoid spreading hepatitis C. If you are not a man who has sex with men, talk to your partners about hepatitis C and how you can best be safe. The risk of spreading hepatitis C through vaginal sex is low. The risk is higher with anal sex.
- ⚠ Avoid sharing toothbrushes, razors, or nail clippers with anyone.

Take care of your body.

It is important to prevent any further damage to your liver. There are several things you can do to help protect your liver:

- ⚠ Avoid drinking alcohol.
- ⚠ Schedule regular checkups with your doctor. Talk to your doctor about checking for liver damage and treatment for hepatitis C.
- ⚠ Some medications may cause damage to your liver if you are infected with hepatitis C. This includes prescription pills, over-the-counter drugs such as Tylenol, and herbal supplements. Your liver's ability to

Follow-up care and treatment

Now that you've tested positive for hepatitis C you will want to talk to your doctor about additional tests to check on the health of your liver. These tests help figure out if any damage has already been done and how well your liver is working. Your doctor may want to send you to a liver specialist called a hepatologist. This doctor will work with you and your regular doctor to figure out the best course of action for you.

There are treatments that can cure hepatitis C! In fact, most people can be cured and treatments are improving every year. How well they work depends on the strain of hepatitis C you have, how long you have been infected, how healthy your liver is, and other factors. It is very important for you to talk to your doctor about treatment. Treatment can save your life!

process some medications changes when you have hepatitis C. Check with a doctor before taking any new medications.

- ⚠ Get tested for hepatitis A & B. If you test negative, you can get vaccinated to protect yourself from these kinds of hepatitis.
- ⚠ Eat a diet low in saturated fat. Avoid fried foods and don't eat too much red meat. A diet low in saturated fat is good for your liver and your whole body.