

Hepatitis C

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a disease that is caused by a virus that affects the liver. HCV can cause serious liver damage (cirrhosis, or buildup of scarring) if it is in the body for a long period of time. Most people with HCV do not have symptoms.

Acute vs. Chronic HCV

Some people who get infected with HCV develop a short-term (acute) infection. Most people with acute HCV develop a long-term (chronic) infection that can lead to serious liver damage.

Causes of HCV

HCV is a virus that is contagious, meaning an infected person can give it to someone else. HCV is spread through blood-to-blood contact. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following risks for HCV and testing recommendations:

- All adults aged 18 years and older
- All pregnant women during each pregnancy
- People who ever injected drugs and shared needles, syringes, or other drug preparation equipment, including those who injected once or a few times many years ago
- People with HIV
- People who have ever received maintenance hemodialysis
- People with persistently abnormal ALT levels
- People who received clotting factor concentrates produced before 1987
- People who received a transfusion of blood or blood components before July 1992
- People who received an organ transplant before July 1992
- Children born to mothers with HCV
- Health care, emergency medical, and public safety personnel after needle sticks, sharps, or mucosal exposure to HCV-positive blood

How is HCV Diagnosed?

HCV is diagnosed through blood tests that confirm exposure to the virus as well as whether the virus has gone away or whether it is still active in the body.

Can HCV be Treated?

The CDC recommends anyone infected with HCV speak to their doctors about receiving treatment. Current medications are in pill form, taken for eight to 12 weeks, and are curing over 90% of people with HCV. (*Pregnant women and children under age three may not be candidates for treatment.)

To learn more about HCV, scan the QR code below. For a complete list of all of our free resources, please visit: liverfoundation.org/resource-center.

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For questions about liver wellness and disease, or for emotional support to patients at the point of crisis and information on local resources including physician referrals, please contact our Helpline at 1-800-465-4837.

