

# HEPATITIS C IN CHILDREN

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by a virus. Hepatitis C may harm your liver. People get Hepatitis C from the blood of a person who already has the virus. Most children do not feel sick because of their Hepatitis C. It is important you go to the doctor to make sure your liver stays healthy.



## What is the Liver?

Your liver is a very important organ in your body that does over 500 different jobs! It helps to clean your blood, it stores energy to keep you going, and it helps you grow! Your liver is on the right side of your body and protected by your ribs.

## What is a Virus?

A virus is a type of germ that can cause you to get sick. Some viruses are easy to catch, like the flu. Our body can fight off these viruses easily too. Some viruses are hard to catch, like Hepatitis C. Our body cannot fight Hepatitis C as easily as it can a virus like the flu. Hepatitis C might not make you feel sick, the way the flu does.

## How Did I Get Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C lives in our blood. To get Hepatitis C, the blood of someone who has the virus gets mixed in with your blood. Some children get Hepatitis C from a needle or another sharp object that has the virus on it. Usually, children get Hepatitis C from their mom when they are born; if your mom has Hepatitis C and her blood gets mixed with your blood then you will get Hepatitis C. There is nothing a mom can do to stop their child from getting Hepatitis C.

## Will My Hepatitis C Go Away?

For most people, children and adults, Hepatitis C does not go away on its own. There is medicine that can cure Hepatitis C; as you get older, your parents and doctors will help you decide when to take the medicine.

## Will I Make Other People Sick?

Remember, Hepatitis C is only in your blood. To give Hepatitis C to someone else, your blood needs to come out of your body and mix with someone else's blood. This is hard to do!

It's important you do not let anyone else touch your blood and you do not touch anyone else's blood. If you get a cut and someone needs to help you, they should wear gloves to keep from touching your blood. If your blood gets on a surface, bleach is the best thing to use to clean it up.

Don't share your toothbrush with anyone or use someone else's toothbrush because sometimes there is a little blood you cannot see. When you get older, you might use a razor to shave; make sure you do not share your razor with anyone and always use your own.

Remember, you cannot give someone Hepatitis C by playing with them, sitting next to them at school, hugging them, or kissing them! You can take part in any activity, just like your friends.

## How Should I Protect My Liver?

It is important to stay active and eat healthy food to keep your liver happy and healthy. You will also need to see your doctor once or twice a year so they can look at your blood and maybe take a picture of your liver to make sure your liver is healthy. It's important that you get vaccinated against other diseases that may impact your liver, like Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B.

When you get older, it's important not to drink alcohol or take certain medicines because these things can harm your liver.

## Who Should I Tell About My Hepatitis C?

Your parents will help you decide who should know about your Hepatitis C. Your doctors, nurses, and dentists should know. Doctors and nurses have to be careful with everyone's blood, not just yours; this is called universal precautions.

Other people do not have to know unless you want to tell them. If you want to tell someone about your Hepatitis C, you have to teach them about it. Always talk to your parents before you tell anyone about your Hepatitis C so they can help you explain all about it.



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