Now that you have been diagnosed with chronic Hep C, you may have many questions. It is important to know that, with appropriate management, chronic Hep C infection can be cured* for many patients. Your doctor will create a management plan for you. However, you have an important role, too.

*Cure means the Hep C virus is not detectable in your blood on a test performed by your doctor several months after treatment has ended.

This brochure provides information about Hep C. It also explains what you can do to help manage chronic Hep C infection.
WHAT IS HEP C?

Hep C is a virus that leads to inflammation of the liver.² The virus can be in your body for many years before liver problems develop.²
HOW DO PEOPLE GET HEP C?

People are infected with Hep C when their blood comes into contact with the blood of another person that is infected with Hep C.³

This can happen in different ways. Some include:

Most Common:
→ Injection **drug** use
→ Receipt of **donated blood**, blood products, or **organs** (prior to 1992 in the US)
→ **Needlestick** injuries in health care settings
→ **Born** to an HCV-infected mother

Less Common:
→ **Sex** with an HCV-infected person
→ **Sharing** personal items contaminated with infectious blood, such as razors or toothbrushes

THERE IS NO VACCINE TO PROTECT AGAINST HEP C.³

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HEP C?

For some people, symptoms appear within two weeks to six months after exposure.³

They may include³⁴:
→ Stomach pain
→ Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)
→ Joint pain
→ Nausea
→ Loss of appetite
→ Tiredness
→ Vomiting
→ Dark urine

MANY PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEP C DO NOT KNOW THEY ARE INFECTED. THIS IS BECAUSE SYMPTOMS MAY TAKE UP TO 30 YEARS TO DEVELOP AFTER BECOMING INFECTED.³ WHEN SYMPTOMS DO APPEAR, THEY ARE OFTEN A SIGN OF LIVER DISEASE.³
WHAT IS CHRONIC HEP C?

Chronic Hep C is a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems.³ During the first 6 months after infection, Hep C infection is considered acute. For some people—about 15% to 25% of those infected—the body will clear the virus without any treatment. They will not develop chronic Hep C.³ People who still have the virus after 6 months have a chronic Hep C infection.² Seventy five percent to 85% of people infected develop chronic Hep C.³ They will need to talk to their doctor about treatment options that may be right for them.

WHAT HAPPENS IF CHRONIC HEP C INFECTION IS NOT TREATED?

Without treatment, chronic Hep C can lead to serious liver problems like cirrhosis, liver cancer, or liver failure.¹ Cirrhosis is a disease in which healthy liver cells are replaced by scar tissue. Once scar tissue replaces normal liver tissue, the liver cannot work well.⁵ About 60% to 70% of people with chronic Hep C will develop chronic liver disease.³ Five percent to 20% of people will develop cirrhosis over a 20- to 30-year period.³ Some people with liver problems will need a liver transplant.³
WHY IS THE LIVER IMPORTANT?

The liver is one of the largest and most important organs in your body. Almost all blood passes through the liver. The liver performs important jobs to keep you healthy:

- **Filters your blood:**
  The liver cleans the blood. It breaks down drugs, alcohol, and food into nutrients your body can use. It also removes toxins from the blood.

- **Stores nutrients:**
  The liver stores vitamins, fats, and sugars until your body needs them.

- **Helps with digestion:**
  The liver produces bile, which helps digest fats.

HOW DOES MY DOCTOR KNOW I HAVE HEP C?

Two tests were needed to determine if you have a chronic Hep C infection. The first test showed if you have ever been exposed to the Hep C virus. This test is called the hepatitis C virus antibody test. The second test showed if you have chronic Hep C infection now. This blood test is called the hepatitis C virus RNA test. You may be asked to have additional tests. These tests will help the doctors determine the current state of your liver.

CAN HEP C BE CURED?

There are multiple treatment options available to treat and potentially cure chronic Hep C. Because Hep C can lead to serious liver problems, it is important to see a doctor who specializes in treating Hep C.
WHAT KIND OF DOCTOR TREATS HEP C?

Once you are diagnosed, it is important for you to see an HCV specialist, who can help you determine a management plan. A specialist may be a hepatologist, a gastroenterologist, or an infectious disease specialist.7

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR TO DETERMINE A MANAGEMENT PLAN THAT MAY BE RIGHT FOR YOU.

HOW DO I PREVENT INFECTING OTHERS WITH HEP C?

If you have Hep C, it can be passed to someone else if his or her blood comes into contact with your blood.3,8

→ Do not share personal items that might have blood on them, such as toothbrushes, razors, and nail clippers

→ Do not donate blood, organs, or semen

→ Do not have unprotected sex. There is a small risk of infecting a sexual partner with Hep C

→ Cover cuts and sores

→ Avoid getting blood on any surfaces. Blood spills should be cleaned with a solution of 1 part household bleach to 10 parts water. Wear gloves when cleaning a blood spill

→ Do not engage in illegal injection or intranasal drug use

HEP C IS NOT SPREAD BY KISSING, HUGGING, SNEEZING, COUGHING, OR SHARING FOOD, UTENSILS, OR DRINKING GLASSES.3
WHAT IS THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION AT WORK?

There is no evidence to support transmission of HCV by food handlers, teachers, or other service providers in the absence of blood-to-blood contact.¹

THERE IS NO NEED TO STOP WORKING, GOING TO SCHOOL, OR ENGAGING IN CHILD CARE BASED ON YOUR HCV STATUS.¹

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MANAGE HEP C?

A healthy lifestyle is important to help manage Hep C. Remember to talk to your doctor before you make any lifestyle changes. Here are a few things that you can do⁸⁻¹⁰:

→ Avoid drinking alcohol, because it can cause more damage to your liver
→ Stop smoking
→ Do not engage in illegal drug use
→ Rest when you are tired
→ Exercise on a regular basis
→ Maintain a healthy diet
  • Eat lots of fruits and vegetables as well as chicken, fish, and some lean red meat
  • Eat multigrain cereals, bread, rice, and pasta
  • Do not eat raw or undercooked shellfish, because they can damage your liver
  • Stay away from foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt
→ Ask your health provider before taking any prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or supplements. Some medicines can damage your liver
→ Talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated for hepatitis A and hepatitis B
WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?

There are several websites that provide information and support.


→ Hep C Guide Forward Motion. www.hepc.com

YOUR ROLE IN MANAGING HEP C

Live a Healthy Lifestyle

Get Support

See a Specialist


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