

"...for living positively, being well"



For more information about hepatitis C visit
www.hcvadvocate.org

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about**

HEPATITIS C



HCV ADVOCATE
www.hcvadvocate.org

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a virus that mainly infects the liver. It is spread by direct blood-to-blood contact—that is, hepatitis C virus-infected blood has to get into someone's bloodstream. Most people with HCV have no symptoms so it's important to get tested if you have a risk factor. It is estimated that more than 4 million Americans are infected with hepatitis C.



YES! to Testing

You may have hepatitis C if you have ever...

- Shared equipment used for injecting drugs, hormones, steroids, vitamins (even just once)
- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- Received blood clotting factors before 1987
- Been on hemodialysis (filtering the blood because the kidneys don't work)
- Had a medical or dental procedure in certain foreign countries
- Had an unsafe (non-sterile) tattoo or piercing—prison or street
- Had a needle-stick accident or blood exposure

Get Tested for Hepatitis C...

The test to find out if you have ever been infected with hepatitis C is called an HCV antibody test. It is very important to know that some people (about 1 in 4) who become infected with hepatitis C are able to naturally rid their body of the hepatitis C virus.

That's why it's important that another blood test called an HCV RNA or viral load test is done to find out if you have the hepatitis C virus in your body now.



Hepatitis C is spread by direct blood-to-blood contact:

PREVENTION

- Don't share needles or works (cookers, cotton, water, ties, pipes, straws, etc.)
- Don't share personal items that may have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes, pierced earrings, etc.)
- Sexual transmission is uncommon; safer sex—using latex condoms—can reduce the risk
- Make sure tattoo and body piercing equipment is sterilized—only use new needles and a separate ink pot
- Cover open sores and wounds

If you find out you have chronic hepatitis C—**DON'T PANIC**—there are many things you can do to stay healthy. One of the most important things you can do is to cut down on or stop drinking alcohol or any other things that may harm the liver.

Hepatitis C is Not a Death Sentence

Tips for living well with hepatitis C:

- See your health-care providers for regular medical check-ups
- Make sure to tell your health-care providers about any vitamins, minerals, supplements, herbs or over-the-counter medications you are taking to make sure they are not harming the liver
- Talk to your health-care providers to find out if you need HCV treatment
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet—lots of fruits, vegetables, and lean meat
- Stop or cut down on alcohol, drugs and cigarettes
- Get the hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines if you are not already protected
- Join a support group
- Exercise regularly (walking, swimming, biking, dancing)
- Rest when you are tired
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water every day
- Don't eat raw or undercooked shellfish