

A Publication of the  
Hepatitis C  
Support Project

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*The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.*

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Contact your local health department or one of the following agencies for more information on hepatitis C.

**The Hepatitis C Support Project**

[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

**Centers for Disease Control Hotline**

888-443-7232

**Hepatitis Foundation International**

800-891-0707

**American Liver Foundation**

800-223-0179

[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

HCV

Hepatitis C

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BASICS

## What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by viruses and other factors. There are several different viruses that can cause hepatitis. Hepatitis C is caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It can cause ongoing (chronic) infection. Many people with HCV do not get sick, but some people can develop serious health problems, especially after 10, 20, or 30 years.

## What are the Symptoms?

Many people with HCV have no symptoms. The most common symptoms include feeling tired (fatigue) and sick to your stomach. Some people say the symptoms feel like they have a mild case of the flu.

## Transmission and Prevention

HCV is spread mainly by direct blood-to-blood exposure.

- Don't share needles or works.
- Don't share personal items like razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, or pierced earrings.
- Make sure tattoo and body piercing equipment is sterilized.
- Cover open sores or wounds.
- Sexual transmission is very uncommon; safer sex—using latex condoms—can reduce the risk.
- A mother can transmit HCV to her baby during pregnancy or birth, but this is uncommon.

## Get Healthy

## HEALTH TIPS

- See your health-care provider for regular check-ups.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Rest when you are tired.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get the hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines if you have not already been exposed.
- Cut down on alcohol, drugs, or herbs.
- Try not too worry too much.

## What About Treatment?

Most people with HCV lead normal healthy lives and will not need medical treatment. Talk with your doctor about whether you need treatment. The latest combination treatments can get rid of HCV in half or more of the people who take them. Educate yourself and talk to you health-care providers about what you can do to stay healthy.

The medications approved to treat HCV include:

- Interferon – a medicine that you inject under the skin to fight HCV.
- Pegylated interferon – a new type of interferon that lasts longer in the body and works better.
- Ribavirin – a pill that helps fight HCV when used with interferon.