

# WHAT IS HEPATITIS?

There are over 100 causes of hepatitis, but if it is caused by a virus it is given a letter, such as hepatitis A, B, or C. The hepatitis C virus 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.

## HEPATITIS MEANS...

“INFLAMMATION OF THE LIVER”

## A PUBLICATION OF THE HEPATITIS C SUPPORT PROJECT

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The information in this brochure 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.

This information is provided by the Hepatitis C Support Project, a non-profit organization for HCV education, support and advocacy.

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



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

The Hepatitis C Support Project  
[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention Information Hotline  
800-232-4636

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# Symptoms Transmission Prevention



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

# SYMPTOMS

Many people with HCV have no symptoms.

The most common symptoms include feeling tired (fatigue) or having muscle and joint aches or nausea. Some people say the symptoms feel like they have a mild case of the flu.

## MEDICATIONS APPROVED TO TREAT HCV INCLUDE:

### INTERFERON

a medicine that you inject under the skin.

### PEGYLATED INTERFERON

a newer type of interferon that lasts longer in the body and works better.

### RIBAVIRIN

a pill that is used with interferon.

# TREATMENT

Most people with HCV lead normal healthy lives and many people don't even need treatment with HCV medicines because the virus is not causing much liver damage. Talk with your health-care provider about whether you need treatment. The latest combination treatment of pegylated interferon plus ribavirin can get rid of HCV in half or more of the people who take it. Educate yourself and talk to your health-care provider about what you can do to stay healthy.

# STAYING HEALTHY 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 infected.
- Stop or cut down on alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes.
- Try not to worry too much.

# TRANSMISSION PREVENTION

HCV is spread by direct blood-to-blood contact.

- Don't share needles, syringes, or works (cooker, cotton, ties, pipes, straws, water).
- Don't share personal items like razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes or pierced earrings.
- Make sure tattoo and body piercing equipment is sterilized—only new needles and a separate ink pot.
- Cover open sores or wounds.
- Sexual transmission is uncommon; safer sex—using latex condoms—can reduce the risk.
- A mother can transmit HCV to her baby during pregnancy, but this doesn't happen very often, and breastfeeding is ok.



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