

Hepatitis C- Factsheet

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is inflammation of the liver caused by an enveloped single-stranded RNA virus, known as hepatitis C virus (HCV).

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Fever, fatigue, dark urine, clay-colored stool, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, joint pain, jaundice.

How is Hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C virus is not spread by casual contact. This virus is found in blood. It is spread through contact with infected blood, such as shared needles used for injection drug use or a needle stick injury. The risk of sexual transmission of HCV is believed to be very low.

How long are people contagious?

People can spread the virus as long as it is present in their blood.

Who gets Hepatitis C?

Anyone can get hepatitis C, but those at higher risk include:

- drug users who share needles
- health care workers who have contact with infected blood
- patients receiving hemodialysis
- persons who have had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992

What treatment is available for people with Hepatitis C?

Several antiviral drugs are available to treat hepatitis C infection. Persons with hepatitis C infection should see a health care provider for medical evaluation and to discuss treatment options. Avoid alcohol. If not already immune, persons with hepatitis C should be vaccinated to prevent hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

No.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting Hepatitis C?

- Do not inject drugs.
- Don't share razors or toothbrushes, or needles used for injecting drugs.
- Avoid unprofessional tattooing or body piercing.
- Avoid contact with blood (wear gloves when touching blood and clean up spilled blood with bleach)

- Do not have unprotected sex
- If you are infected with HCV, do not donate blood