



www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

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## Hepatitis C Fact Sheet

<b>SIGNS &amp; SYMPTOMS</b>	80% of persons have no signs or symptoms.																						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• jaundice</li> <li>• fatigue</li> <li>• dark urine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• abdominal pain</li> <li>• loss of appetite</li> <li>• nausea</li> </ul>																					
<b>CAUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hepatitis C virus (HCV)</li> </ul>																						
<b>LONG-TERM EFFECTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic infection: 75%-85% of infected persons</li> <li>• Chronic liver disease: 20% of chronically infected persons</li> <li>• Cirrhosis: 1%-5% of infected persons may die</li> <li>• Leading indication for liver transplant</li> </ul>																						
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurs when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected.</li> <li>• HCV is spread through sharing needles or "works" when "shooting" drugs, through needlesticks or sharps exposures on the job, or from an infected mother to her baby during birth.</li> </ul>																						
<b>Recommendations for testing based on risk for HCV infection</b>	<p>Persons at risk for HCV infection might also be at risk for infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV) or HIV.</p> <p>Recommendations for Testing Based on Risk for HCV Infection</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PERSONS</th> <th>RISK OF INFECTION</th> <th>TESTING RECOMMENDED?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Injecting drug users</td> <td>High</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recipients of clotting factors made before 1987</td> <td>High</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hemodialysis patients</td> <td>Intermediate</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recipients of blood and/or solid organs before 1992</td> <td>Intermediate</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People with undiagnosed liver problems</td> <td>Intermediate</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Infants born to infected mothers</td> <td>Intermediate</td> <td>After age 12-18 mos.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		PERSONS	RISK OF INFECTION	TESTING RECOMMENDED?	Injecting drug users	High	Yes	Recipients of clotting factors made before 1987	High	Yes	Hemodialysis patients	Intermediate	Yes	Recipients of blood and/or solid organs before 1992	Intermediate	Yes	People with undiagnosed liver problems	Intermediate	Yes	Infants born to infected mothers	Intermediate	After age 12-18 mos.
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Healthcare/public safety workers	Low	Only after known exposure
People having sex with multiple partners	Low	No*
People having sex with an infected steady partner	Low	No*

\*Anyone who wants to get tested should ask their doctor.

## PREVENTION

- There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.
- Do not shoot drugs; if you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program; if you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water, or "works", and get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B.
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes).
- If you are a health care or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps; get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood on them or if the artist or piercer does not follow good health practices.
- HCV can be spread by sex, but this is rare. If you are having sex with more than one steady sex partner, use latex condoms\* correctly and every time to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. You should also get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue.

## TREATMENT & MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

[AASLD Practice Guideline: Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of Hepatitis C](#)

- HCV positive persons should be evaluated by their doctor for liver disease.
- Interferon and ribavirin are two drugs licensed for the treatment of persons with chronic hepatitis C.
- Combination therapy, using pegylated interferon and ribavirin, is currently the treatment of choice.
- Combination therapy can get rid of the virus in about 5 out of 10 persons for genotype 1 and in up to 8 out of 10 persons for genotype 2 and 3.
- Drinking alcohol can make your liver disease worse.

## STATISTICS & TRENDS

- Estimated number of new infections per year has declined from an average of 240,000 in the 1980s to about 19,000 in 2006.
- Most infections are due to illegal injection drug use.
- Transfusion-associated cases occurred prior to blood donor screening; now occur in less than one per 2 million transfused units of blood.
- Estimated 4.1 million (1.6%) Americans have been infected with HCV, of whom 3.2 million are chronically infected.
- The risk for perinatal HCV, transmission is about 4%.
- If coinfecting with HIV the risk for perinatal infection is about 19%.

\* The efficacy of [latex condoms](#) in preventing infection with HCV is unknown, but their proper use may reduce transmission.