



What Do I Need to Know About Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a viral infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). It can be symptomless, or cause a mild illness lasting a few weeks. Long-term chronic Hep C can cause liver damage, scarring of the liver (cirrhosis), liver cancer, & liver failure, which can lead to death if untreated.

Why do I need to be screened for Hep C?

Many people with HCV do not know they have it. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has suggested widespread HCV testing for adults. Early diagnosis means treatment can be obtained before serious liver damage or scarring occurs; the sooner you get treated for HCV, the less damage to your liver.

An excellent resource for complete information on Hepatitis C, such as who is at risk, who should be tested, & details regarding testing & treatment is on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/cfaq.htm>

How could I get Hep C?

Hep C is spread when blood from a person infected with HCV enters the body of someone who is not infected. There are a number of ways Hep C can be acquired besides the well-known IV drug use. These include: an accidental needle stick in a healthcare setting, mother-to-fetus transmission, sharing personal care items with a person with Hep C, sexual contact with an infected person, a tattoo or body piercing done with non-sterile instruments, & organ transplant or transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products prior to the institution of blood screening in 1992.

What are the symptoms of Hep C?

The CDC reports that 70% to 80% of people with acute Hepatitis C don't show symptoms. More than half of persons who become infected with HCV will develop chronic infection. A person can live for years, even decades, without knowing they have Hepatitis C.

Once symptoms appear, damage to the liver has already begun. Symptoms include: abdominal pain, loss of appetite, fever, fatigue, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, nausea, vomiting, joint pain, & jaundice (yellowing of skin & eyes).

Is there any treatment for Hep C?

There is currently no vaccine for Hep C, but today's antiviral drug treatment means over 90% of those treated will be cured in 8 to 12 weeks.

You simply take one dose at the same time every day for 8 weeks. It is critical that you not miss even one dose. The treatment process includes baseline antibody blood testing, followed by viral load testing, which determines the severity of the Hep C infection. Labs are repeated at 4 weeks & 8 weeks. At 20 weeks, if lab results show no viral load, you are considered cured.

Of course, safe behaviors are necessary to prevent possible reinfection. Your treatment team can advise you about preventing reinfection.

How can I get treatment for Hep C?

Your PVHC Treatment Team consists of a provider, a pharmacist, & a case manager. This team will work with you & your insurance company/Medicaid/Medicare & pharmaceutical companies to cover the cost of your treatment.

*For information on testing & treatment,
contact PureView Health Center's
Hepatitis C Case Manager at 406.457.0000*



Hepatitis C
Get Tested
Get Treated
Get Cured!