

Hepatitis C: Know the Facts



Many people don't know the facts about hepatitis C. You may be concerned about things you've heard. Read on to learn what's true about the hepatitis C virus (HCV) and what's not.

Facts about HCV

- You can still have sex. Hepatitis C can be spread through sex. But this is uncommon. Your partner is safest if you use a latex condom correctly every time you have sex. If you're in a committed relationship, you may not need to change your habits. Talk it over with your partner. Do what feels right for both of you.
- Your family members are safe. Hepatitis C can be spread only through contact with infected blood. Touching, kissing, sneezing, coughing, and sharing food are all safe, as long as there is no blood exposure. But sharing anything that may have blood on it, like a toothbrush, needles, sharps, or razors, is not. Protect yourself by staying away from other people's blood.
- Most people with hepatitis C don't die of it when treated.
- You can greatly reduce your chance of having life-threatening liver problems by not drinking alcohol, losing weight if needed, and taking other steps to protect your liver.
- If you are a woman, you can still breastfeed. If you are being treated for hepatitis C, or if your nipples are cracked or bleeding, you should not breastfeed. Otherwise, breastfeeding with hepatitis C is safe.
- You can have hepatitis C and not feel ill. Most people who have hepatitis C don't have obvious symptoms. Severe symptoms are most common in later stages of the disease when cirrhosis develops. Because hepatitis C often doesn't cause symptoms, experts advise a screening test for all adults 18 years and older.
- HCV is 90 % curable with treatment. Talk with your healthcare provider about treatment choices. Medicines can be taken by mouth. Injections are no longer needed.
- There is no vaccine for HCV. People who have been cured can get the disease again.
- HCV can affect your whole body. Talk about any signs of HCV with your healthcare provider.
- Some other conditions can be seen more often in patients with hepatitis C. These include diabetes, vascular disease, kidney problems, skin rash, eye trouble, and thyroid disease. Hepatitis C may cause or make these problems worse. Talk about these risks with a specialist.

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