

# HEPATITIS C FACT SHEET:

## How is Hepatitis C (HCV) treated?

There are several types of medications available to treat HCV. Everyone who has HCV does not necessarily need treatment. A doctor experienced in treating HCV can determine if you need to be treated and when you need to start.

## Where can I get more information?

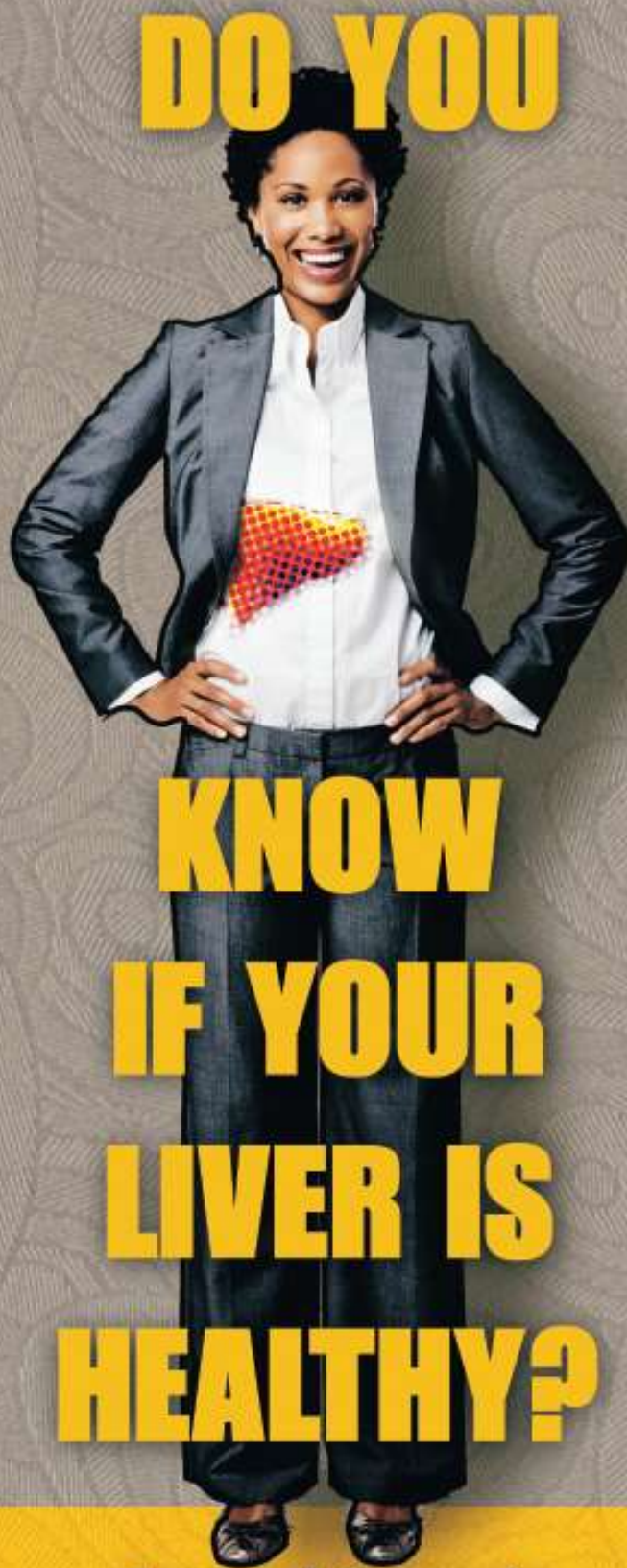
Resources that are available to DC residents can be accessed at

<http://www.doh.dc.gov/hepatitis>



GOVERNMENT OF  
THE DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD,  
Tuberculosis Administration  
(HAHSTA)



# DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR LIVER IS HEALTHY?

3 out of 4 people  
with hepatitis don't know  
they have it.



# HEPATITIS C FACT SHEET:

## What is Hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C (HCV) is a virus that can lead to a serious chronic infection that can damage the liver.
- When first infected, a person can develop an acute infection which can range from a mild illness to a serious condition requiring hospitalization.
- About 75% of people who are infected will go on to have a chronic infection.
- Nationwide it is estimated that at least 3.2 million people are living with chronic HCV.
- In Washington, DC over 13,000 people were diagnosed with HCV from 2005-2010.
- HCV infection can lead to serious liver problems, including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

## How is Hepatitis C (HCV) Spread?

HCV is spread when blood from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected. Many people have become infected with HCV by sharing needles and other equipment used to inject drugs. Other possible ways are:

- Needle-sticks or sharps exposures on the job (healthcare workers)
- Unprotected sexual activity
- Tattooing
- During birth, when the virus passes from an infected mother to her baby
- Infection from contaminated surgical instruments.

## Who should be tested for HCV?

- People between the ages of 47-67 (born between 1945-1965)
- Current and former injection drug users

- People who received blood, blood products or organs before 1992. (Infection from donor organs or blood transfusions is much less common now that there is wide spread screening for HCV.)
- Hemodialysis patients or persons who have spent many years on dialysis for kidney failure
- People who received body piercing or tattoos done with non-sterile instruments
- Healthcare workers
- People with abnormal liver tests
- Infants born to infected mothers
- People living with HIV

## How can I prevent HCV Transmission?

Make sure you know your HCV status. There is no vaccine available for HCV. You should avoid sharing needles, other injection drug equipment, or any other implements that might hold blood (razors, toothbrushes, tattooing equipment, etc.)

## How is HCV diagnosed?

Your doctor can diagnose HCV by doing specific blood tests.

## What should I do if my test for HCV is positive?

- You should see your doctor regularly to discuss the health of your liver. You should ask to be referred to a specialist.
- You should also get tested for Hepatitis A (HAV) and Hepatitis B (HBV), and get vaccinated against these viruses if those tests are negative.
- Avoid drinking alcohol. It can speed up the rate of liver damage.
- Ask your doctor before you take any medications (prescription or over-the-counter), including herbal supplements and vitamins, as some may damage the liver of someone with HCV.



**ASK YOUR DOCTOR FOR A HEPATITIS TEST  
AT YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT.**