



[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://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: 55%-85% of infected persons</li> <li>● Chronic liver disease: 70% of chronically infected persons</li> <li>● Deaths from chronic liver disease: 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>	

**Recommendations for testing based on risk for HCV infection**

Persons at risk for HCV infection might also be at risk for infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV) or HIV.

Recommendations for Testing Based on Risk for HCV Infection

<b>PERSONS</b>	<b>RISK OF INFECTION</b>	<b>TESTING RECOMMENDED?</b>
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 12-18 mos. old
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.

<p><b>PREVENTION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.</li> <li>● 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 &amp; B.</li> <li>● Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes).</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TREATMENT &amp; MEDICAL MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p><a href="#">AASLD Practice Guideline: Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of Hepatitis C</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HCV positive persons should be evaluated by their doctor for liver disease.</li> <li>● Interferon and ribavirin are two drugs licensed for the treatment of persons with chronic hepatitis C.</li> <li>● Interferon can be taken alone or in combination with ribavirin. Combination therapy, using pegylated interferon and ribavirin, is currently the treatment of choice.</li> <li>● Combination therapy can get rid of the virus in up to 5 out of 10 persons for genotype 1 and in up to 8 out of 10 persons for genotype 2 and 3.</li> <li>● Drinking alcohol can make your liver disease worse.</li> </ul>

## STATISTICS & TRENDS

- Number of new infections per year has declined from an average of 240,000 in the 1980s to about 26,000 in 2004.
- Most infections are due to illegal injection drug use.
- Transfusion-associated cases occurred prior to blood donor screening; now occurs 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.