



HEPATITIS C

The Facts



Get Tested. Get Cured!



A close-up profile of a man wearing a dark beanie and a dark jacket, looking out over a city skyline. The background is blurred, showing buildings and a body of water. A large yellow triangle is in the top right corner.

EVEN IF YOU FEEL
HEALTHY, HEPATITIS C
MAY BE DAMAGING
YOUR LIVER.

Your liver keeps you healthy in many ways, such as by removing toxins from your blood and transforming nutrients from food into energy.

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. There are different types of hepatitis. **Hepatitis C** (Hep C for short) is caused by a virus that infects the liver. The virus is transmitted through blood.

Hep C Can Lead to Serious Health Problems:

- Liver damage
- Cirrhosis
- Liver failure
- Liver cancer

Hep C can even cause death.



Symptoms

Many people with Hep C **do not** have symptoms and do not know they are infected. Symptoms of Hep C can take up to 30 years to develop. When symptoms do appear, they are often a sign of advanced liver disease.

Symptoms and signs of Hep C can include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Grey-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice

If you have Hep C, you're not alone.

Nearly **4 million** people in the United States have Hep C.
Almost **150,000** people living in New York City have Hep C.

By learning more about Hep C, you can make the best decisions for your health.

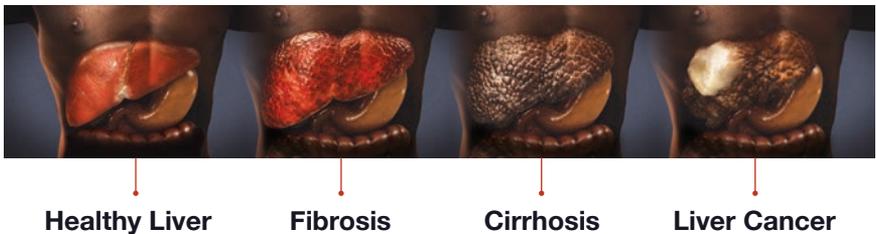
Stages of Hep C

Acute Hep C refers to the first six months after infection.

- Some people who get infected clear Hep C on their own within six months.
- Most people do not have symptoms of Hep C in the acute stage.

Chronic Hep C refers to a long-term Hep C infection.

- Most people who get infected with Hep C will develop chronic infection.
- Chronic Hep C can cause liver inflammation and scarring which can lead to moderate liver damage (fibrosis) and severe liver damage (cirrhosis).
- People with cirrhosis are at high risk for liver failure, liver cancer and even death.
- Liver damage often happens slowly, over 20 to 30 years.



Healthy Liver

Fibrosis

Cirrhosis

Liver Cancer

Hep C and Liver Health Tests

Your doctor may perform some of these tests to confirm that you have Hep C or to find out how Hep C is affecting your health:

Blood Tests

- **Hep C Antibody Test:** Shows if you were ever infected with the Hep C virus. If this test is positive, you'll need to take another test (the Hep C RNA Test) to see if you have Hep C now.

- **Hep C RNA (Viral Load) Test** (also called PCR): Shows how much Hep C virus is in your blood now. If this test is positive, it means you are currently infected with Hep C.

If you go on Hep C treatment, your Hep C RNA will be checked during and after treatment to find out if the treatment is working. If the treatment is successful, the viral load will drop to zero (undetectable) and stay there.

- **Hep C Genotype Test:** Shows what type of Hep C virus you have. Knowing your genotype helps your doctor pick the best treatment for you.
- **Liver Function Tests (LFTs):** Measure how well the liver is working. High levels may mean you have liver inflammation or damage.
- **Liver Fibrosis Tests** (such as FibroSure): Look for the amount of liver damage (fibrosis).

Liver Ultrasound/FibroScan®

Non-invasive imaging tests that show liver damage by providing a picture of the shape, size or stiffness of the liver.

Liver Biopsy

Removal of a small piece of liver tissue with a needle. The tissue is checked under a microscope for damage or disease.

Liver Cancer Screening Tests

Blood tests or ultrasound recommended for people with cirrhosis every six months.

If You Have Hep C



Get Care with a Doctor Who Knows about Hep C

See your doctor regularly to make sure you're staying healthy.

Even if you feel great, your liver may have problems.

Your doctor will help you make the best decisions to improve your health and protect your liver.

Consider Hep C Treatment

Most people with Hep C can be **cured** by taking antiviral medication for several months. Being cured means that no virus is found in the blood a few months after finishing treatment.

Thanks to **new Hep C antiviral medication**, treatment is now easier, shorter and more likely to cure Hep C than in the past.

Before	Now
Often lasted 1 year	Usually lasts 2 to 3 months
Weekly injections and pills	Pills , often just 1 a day
Severe side effects (flu-like symptoms, depression, anemia)	Mild side effects (headache, nausea)

Over 90% of patients can be cured.

The new treatments have been studied in large clinical trials over many years, and are found to be safer than past treatments. They stop replication of the virus, which means **it's not just remission, it's a cure!**

There is No Hep C Vaccine or Immunity. Even if you are treated and cured, you can always get re-infected, so it is important to protect yourself from blood exposure.

Protect Your Health

It is safest for your health not to drink alcohol at all.

Alcohol increases the speed of liver damage. Avoiding alcohol is one of the most important things you can do to protect your liver. Learn tips for cutting down at rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov.

If you need help cutting down on alcohol, speak with your doctor or visit 800LifeNet.org for counseling or a referral for treatment.

Ask your doctor before taking over-the-counter medications, natural medications, vitamins or supplements.

Some over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), vitamins or supplements such as iron, herbs or “natural drugs” can be dangerous for your liver. Tell all of your doctors that you have Hep C so they can help you avoid medications that may harm your liver.

Eat a healthy diet, exercise and maintain a healthy body weight.

Get support. Share your feelings with your doctor and people you trust.

Consider connecting with a Hep C Support Group in person or online. Visit HepFree.nyc for more information.

If you need help managing your feelings, speak with your doctor or visit 800LifeNet.org for counseling or a referral to treatment.

Ask Your Doctor

- Is my liver healthy? Do I have liver damage?
- Should I take vaccines for other diseases such as Hep A, Hep B or the flu to protect my health?
- What is the best weight, diet and exercise routine for me?
- What is the best care for my Hep C?
- Is it safe for me to take my medicines (including over-the-counter medicines), herbs, vitamins and supplements?
- Should I take Hep C antiviral treatment?



Protect Others from Hep C

The Hep C virus can live outside of the body for up to three weeks.

- **If you inject drugs, only use new or sterile drug use equipment or ‘works’** such as needles, syringes, cotton, cups, ties, razors, cutters, rinse water, cookers, straws or pipes.
- **Do not share personal care items** such as toothbrushes, razors, needles, nail files, nail clippers, nail scissors or washcloths that may have touched your blood.
- **Cover cuts and open sores** with bandages, and make sure others do not touch your blood.
- **Have safe sex.** If you have multiple sexual partners or if you have HIV or a sexually transmitted infection (STI), use condoms every time.
- **Clean up** blood spills with a bleach solution (one part bleach and nine parts water).
- **If you’re pregnant, talk about Hep C with your doctor.** Hep C can be transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy or childbirth.



Casual Contact Is Safe

You **cannot** spread Hep C through sneezing, coughing, kissing, hugging, shaking hands or talking, or by sharing eating utensils, drinking glasses, food or drinking water. You should not be excluded from work, school, play or childcare if you have Hep C.

Information & Resources

New York City Department of Health

Call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health/hepatitis

Low-Cost Hep C Medical Care at NYC Public Hospitals

nyc.gov/hhc

Find Health Insurance

<https://a858-ihss.nyc.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

cdc.gov/hepatitis

American Liver Foundation

Hep C help-line, medical provider locator and online support group 1-800-465-4837 or liverfoundation.org

HCV Advocate

Patient Support and Education

hcvadvocate.org

Harm Reduction Resources

harmreduction.org

LifeNet

24-hour mental health and substance use hotline and referral database. Visit 800LifeNet.org or call:

English:

1-800-LIFENET

(1-800-543-3638)

Spanish/Español:

1-877-AYUDESE

(1-877-298-3373)

Mandarin/Cantonese:

1-877-990-8585

NYC Hep C Task Force

www.HepFree.nyc

Hep C Risk Assessment

- Were you born between 1945 and 1965?
- Have you ever injected drugs, hormones, steroids, silicone or cosmetics - even if it was once a long time ago?
- Did you have a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992?
- Are you HIV+?
- Were you born in Egypt, Pakistan, Russia or the former Soviet Republic?
- Did you have a blood transfusion or medical procedure in Egypt, Pakistan, Russia or the former Soviet Republic?
- Have you ever inhaled (snorted) drugs?
- Did your mother have Hepatitis C when you were born?
- Have you ever gotten a tattoo or piercing from anyone other than a licensed professional?
- Have you had abnormal liver tests or been told you have liver disease?
- Have you ever been on long-term dialysis?
- Were you ever exposed to blood or stuck with a needle on the job?
- Have you ever been incarcerated?
- Are you a man who has sex with men?
- Do you have sex with multiple partners?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are at risk for Hep C. Talk to your doctor about getting tested, or text **LIVER** to **877877** for more information.

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Scan to view the NYC Health Department's
Hepatitis homepage, **text LIVER** to **877877**
or download the **NYC Liver Health app**
for your next steps.