

## Hepatitis C - Factsheet

### What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an inflammation of the liver caused by an enveloped single-stranded RNA virus, known as hepatitis C virus (HCV).

### What are the symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Symptoms generally occur from two to twelve weeks after exposure but may last up to several months. Symptoms can include fever, fatigue, dark urine, clay-colored stool, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, joint pain, jaundice.

### How is Hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C virus is not spread by casual contact. This virus is found in blood. It is spread through contact with infected blood, such as shared needles used for injection drug use or a needle stick injury. The risk of sexual transmission of HCV is believed to be very low.

### How long are people contagious?

People can spread the virus as long as it is present in their blood. This means that if treatment is ongoing and not complete, the virus can still be spread.

### Who gets Hepatitis C?

Anyone can get hepatitis C, but those at higher risk include:

- people who share needles
- health care workers who have contact with infected blood
- people who receive donated blood, blood products, and organs
- people born to an HCV-infected mother

### What treatment is available for people with Hepatitis C?

Several oral antiviral drugs are available to treat hepatitis C infection, and it can be cured in most cases. Persons with hepatitis C infection should see a health care provider for medical evaluation and to discuss treatment options. If not already immune, persons with hepatitis C should be vaccinated to prevent hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

### Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

No.

### How can I protect myself and my family from getting Hepatitis C?

- Avoid sharing needles, syringes, or other drug equipment.
- Avoid sharing personal care items, such as razors, nail clippers, and toothbrushes.
- Avoid non-professional tattooing or body piercing.

- Avoid contact with blood (wear gloves when touching blood and clean up spilled blood with bleach)
- Avoid unprotected sex
- If you are infected with HCV, avoid donating blood