CHRONIC HEPATITIS C

Information for After Your Diagnosis

KNOW MORE HEPATITIS™

What is chronic Hepatitis C?

Chronic Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease that results from a long-term infection with the Hepatitis C virus. If left untreated, chronic Hepatitis C can lead to serious health problems including liver damage, liver failure, and even liver cancer.

How is chronic Hepatitis C diagnosed?

Diagnosis of chronic Hepatitis C requires at least two different blood tests. A reactive, or positive, Hepatitis C Antibody Test should be followed by an additional blood test.

If the additional test is positive, this means the Hepatitis C virus is present in the blood.

If both blood tests are reactive, or positive, your doctor may send you to a specialist for additional tests to confirm that you are chronically infected. These tests may include:

- Liver function tests, also called a liver panel, which tell how well your liver is working
- An ultrasound exam to create a visual image of your liver
- A liver biopsy, which is the removal of a tiny bit of your liver, allows your doctor to examine the health of your liver
- A viral load test which determines how much of the virus you have in your body

What if I don't feel sick or have symptoms?

Most people with chronic Hepatitis C do not have symptoms. You can live with an infection for decades without having symptoms or feeling sick.

Many people can live with chronic Hepatitis C for decades without having symptoms or feeling sick.

How is chronic Hepatitis C treated?

Medications, called antivirals, can be used to treat many people with chronic Hepatitis C. However, not everyone needs or can benefit from treatment. It is important to be treated by a doctor experienced in treating chronic Hepatitis C. He or she can determine the most appropriate medical care. Decisions about treatment are based on many factors, such as a person's overall health and the condition of his or her liver.

Can Hepatitis C be cured?

For many people with Hepatitis C, medical treatment can be successful and can result in the virus no longer being detected in the blood. This is referred to as a sustained viral response or SVR.

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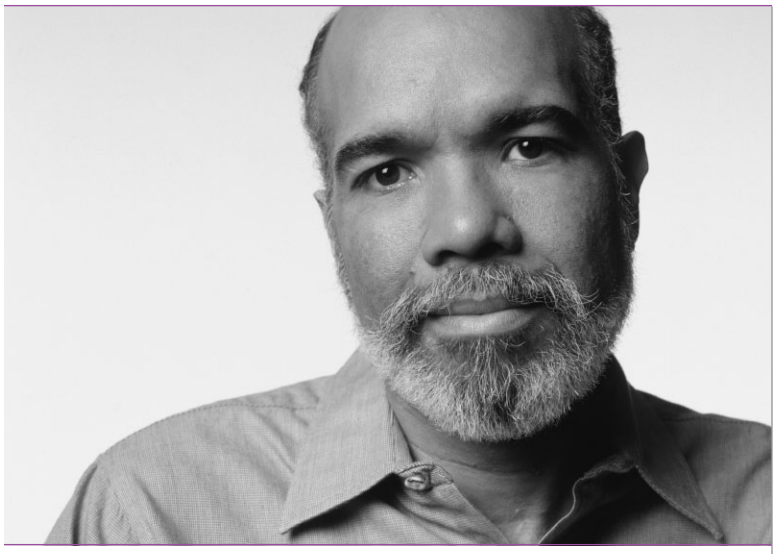
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Can I spread Hepatitis C to my family or people that live with me?

Since Hepatitis C is spread primarily through blood, you should not share any personal items that might have blood on them, such as toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers, or even glucose monitors. It is important to cover all cuts and sores. If you think your blood may have come in contact with any surface, thoroughly clean the area.

Hepatitis C **is not spread** by kissing, hugging, sneezing, coughing, or sharing food, eating utensils or glasses.

Can I spread Hepatitis C to my sex partners?

While the Hepatitis C virus can be passed during sex, it is very uncommon. If you have one, long-term steady sexual partner, the chance is very low that you will give Hepatitis C to that person through sexual activity. However, if you have multiple sex partners, an STD, HIV, or engage in rough sex, the risk of spreading the virus is increased.

What else can I do to protect my liver?

- Ask your doctor before taking any prescription, over-the-counter medications, supplements or vitamins. For instance, some drugs, such as certain pain medications, can potentially damage the liver.
- Avoid alcohol since it can increase the speed of liver damage.
- Talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B.

For more information

Talk to your health professional, call your health department, or visit www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis.