

THE LITTLE YELLOW BOOK OF

Hep C

FACTS



Hep C is bloody serious

Get tested

There is treatment

What

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a blood-borne virus that causes inflammation of the liver.

Over time this may lead to scarring of the liver and serious liver disease.

What

There are different strains of hepatitis C, called genotypes.



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What

Treatment today is pangenotypic (treats all strains).

For most people it is not necessary to know which genotype they have.

Transmission

Hepatitis C virus is transmitted only by blood-to-blood contact.



Transmission

The most common way hepatitis C is transmitted is by sharing equipment, needles, syringes, spoons, tourniquets and filters.

Transmission

Hepatitis C infection has also been contracted from:

- Blood product transfusions before 1992.
- Unsterile medical, dental and cosmetic procedures (particularly in countries with low levels of infection control).
- Unsterile tattooing and body piercing.



Transmission

Hepatitis C is **NOT** a sexually transmitted infection.

However, when blood is present during sex, there is a chance of transmission.

Men who have sex with men (MSM) are at higher risk of sexual transmission of hepatitis C.



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Transmission

It's perfectly OK to share food, drinks, hugs and kisses with someone who has hepatitis C.



Transmission

You can't get hepatitis C from toilet seats.

You can't get hepatitis C from mosquitoes.



Transmission

The risk of mothers passing hepatitis C to their unborn child is very low.

It is recommended you hold off getting your child tested until after they are 18 months old. By then the remaining antibodies from the mother should be out of the child's system.

Transmission

It is important to take precautions when blood is present to prevent transmission of hepatitis C, such as wearing gloves and covering wounds.

This is known as universal blood precautions.

ALL blood should be treated as infectious.



Symptoms

Many people with hepatitis C infection experience no symptoms.

Symptoms

Symptoms may not manifest until 15 years or more after initial exposure.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of chronic hepatitis C infection are tiredness, feeling unwell and discomfort around the liver.

How many

It is estimated that 45,000 people in New Zealand are infected with hepatitis C, and 25% of people do not know they are infected.

Another 1000 people in New Zealand are infected with hepatitis C each year.

Testing

There are two tests for hepatitis C:

- **Antibody test** (finger prick or blood draw)

A positive result means that you have been exposed to the hepatitis C virus at some time in your life. It does not necessarily mean that you have the hepatitis C virus now.

Testing

- **Hepatitis C Viral load test**

This is a test to see if the hepatitis C virus is present in your body.

A detectable viral load shows the amount of virus present as a number. This means you have hepatitis C.

A not detected result means you do not have hepatitis C.

Hep C

Hepatitis C is the leading cause for cirrhosis (severe liver scarring), liver failure and liver cancer, and now the leading cause for liver transplants in New Zealand.

Disclosure

A person with hepatitis C is not legally required to disclose their positive status unless they are asked by an employer for a lawful purpose.

This may include applying to join the NZ Defence Force and NZ Police as well as healthcare roles that involve undertaking exposure prone procedures.

Disclosure

It is illegal to discriminate against a person because they have, or are assumed to have, hepatitis C.

Treatment

About 25% of people who contract hepatitis C clear the virus from their bodies without treatment, usually during the first six months after exposure.

Treatment

If you clear the virus with or without treatment, you will still be hepatitis C antibody positive. This only indicates previous exposure to the virus.

There is **NO** vaccination against hepatitis C.

Treatment

Hepatitis C can be treated (cured).

Successful treatment means the Hepatitis C virus can no longer be detected in their blood (viral load test).

Treatment

Maviret is taken orally, 3 tablets taken together, once a day with a snack.

Most people require 8 weeks of treatment. It has a 92-98% cure rate.



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Treatment

Successful treatment does not immunise a person against hepatitis C.

It is possible to be re-infected.

Living with...

There is a higher risk of liver damage if you have hepatitis C and drink alcohol.

Living with...

Hepatitis C can lead to a deterioration in dental health.

In some people it reduces saliva production, which in turn affects the health of gums and teeth.

Living with...

Getting hepatitis A or B or HIV can lead to a more rapid progression of liver disease in a person with hepatitis C.

It is recommended that people with hepatitis C be vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

Are you at risk?

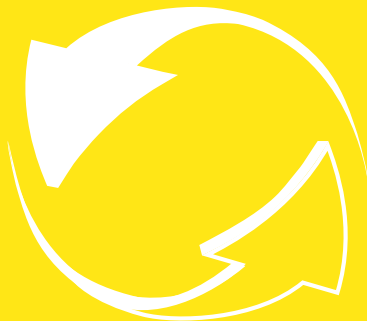
For more information contact :-

- Your local Needle Exchange outlet.
- Your G.P.

HCV Test available at any
Sexual Health Clinic in NZ
(anonymous & confidential)



Needle Exchange Programme



www.nznep.org.nz

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