

# HEPATITIS C FACTSHEET

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is one of the most common bloodborne infections.

## WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne disease that infects the liver. Hepatitis C can cause an acute, short-term illness or a chronic, life-long infection. An estimated 75-85% of HCV infected persons will develop chronic infection. Chronic HCV infection can cause life-threatening cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver failure, liver cancer, and in severe cases death.

## HOW DOES HEPATITIS C SPREAD?

Hepatitis C is spread mainly by exposure to blood and blood products when the blood of a HCV infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected with HCV. Mainly this involves direct passage of blood through the skin through sharing syringes or drug equipment with a person infected with HCV. Much less often, sexual contact, birth to an infected mother, unregulated tattooing, or needle-sticks can lead to HCV infection. HCV is not spread by sharing meals or utensils, breastfeeding, or casual contact, such as shaking hands, hugging, kissing, coughing, or sneezing.

## SYMPTOMS

- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Fatigue (tired)
- Dark-colored urine
- Joint pain
- Clay-colored stool

Many persons have no symptoms of HCV infection. Symptoms may not occur until after the development of liver complications including cirrhosis, liver failure, and/or liver cancer. **If you have any symptoms, please contact your health care provider immediately for treatment/recommendations.**

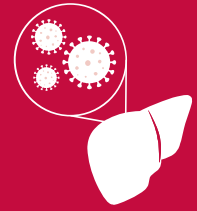
## DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS

There are 7 distinct HCV genotypes or genetic make-up.

## PREVENTION

Hepatitis C can be prevented by avoiding exposure and practicing good hygiene. People currently injecting drugs should not share needles or drug equipment with others. The use of latex condoms may decrease the risk of catching or passing HCV through sex.

## WHO SHOULD BE TESTED FOR HEPATITIS C?



A blood test is required for diagnosis of HCV. It is recommended all adults

aged 18 years or older receive one-time hepatitis C testing. In addition, people at greater risk including the following should receive hepatitis C testing:

- People who currently inject drugs, share syringes, or drug equipment
- People with a history of injection drug use
- People born between 1945 to 1965
- People with HIV
- People who receive or received hemodialysis
- Infants born to HCV-infected mothers
- Healthcare providers and emergency responders who have exposure to blood

All pregnant women should be tested for HCV during pregnancy.

There are two standard blood tests that diagnose hepatitis C:

- **Hepatitis C antibody testing** confirms exposure to HCV
- **Hepatitis C RNA testing** searches the blood for HCV and confirms the presence of HCV infection

## HEPATITIS C IS CURABLE

Hepatitis C has a cure. Direct-acting antiviral (DAA) oral medications are available to treat HCV. DAAs are very effective at targeting HCV and achieving a sustained virologic response. Hepatitis C DAA treatment regimens range from 8-12 (up to 24) weeks.

