



Are you Hep C aware?

awareness

support

information

prevention

To find out more visit

www.hepinfo.ie

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that affects the liver, causing it to become inflamed and not work as effectively in the body.

About Hepatitis C

- Hepatitis C is a serious chronic illness that requires treatment
- Hepatitis C is a curable disease for most
- Hepatitis C testing is free at public testing clinics
- You can get hepatitis C through contact with an infected person's blood
- The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested
- Untreated hepatitis C can cause serious health problems, such as liver disease
- Hepatitis C will not go away in about 4 out of every 5 people who become infected - it will become chronic and will require treatment



Signs and Symptoms

You can have hepatitis C and not have any signs or symptoms.

However, if symptoms exist they can include:

- Tiredness/fatigue
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain and discomfort
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Fever
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes)

These signs and symptoms can also be associated with other illnesses or infections.

Do You Know?

Most people will show no signs or symptoms of initial infection.

Are you at risk?

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus. You can get it through blood-to-blood contact with an infected person's blood.

Do You Know?

Hepatitis C can still be passed on to others even if a person has no symptoms.

You can get it through:

- Blood to blood contact
- Using/sharing drug injecting equipment (highest rate of transmission) and using/sharing contaminated snorting/smoking equipment
- In rare cases, it can be transmitted through certain unprotected sexual practices if blood is present
- Mother to child during childbirth although rare (breastfeeding is possible if nipples are not cracked and bleeding)
- Tattoos, body modifications and acupuncture if the tools used were not sterilised properly after being used on another person

Prevention

Use safer drug-using practices, safer sex practices, and get tested.

Hepatitis C is a preventable illness. You can avoid infection by:

- Safer drug using practices: avoid sharing any drug-using equipment.
- Do not share personal grooming items e.g. razors, tweezers, toothbrushes, nail scissors, with an infected person.
- If getting tattoos or body piercings ensure that the facility is licensed and the equipment used is sterilised.
- Use condoms for anal, vaginal and oral sex, and avoid sharing sex toys.
- Make informed decisions: talk to partner(s) about testing, drug-using practices and safer sex practices, and get informed about the risks.
- Use common sense when cleaning up spillages of human blood and body fluids – wear gloves for example. Take care to avoid needle stick injuries where needles and other skin piercing equipment are used.
- Get tested, and treated if required. Ask about free tests at public testing clinics.

Do You Know?

Hepatitis C can live outside the body on surfaces for several days and is considered 10 times more infectious than HIV.

Who should go for a Hepatitis C test?

Anyone who thinks they may have had, at any time, a risky exposure to hepatitis C, should get tested.

- Anyone who has any symptoms
- Anyone who has ever injected drugs (including steroid and botox injectors)
- Anyone who has ever shared drug-using equipment including injecting, skin popping, smoking and snorting equipment
- People with sexual partners who have hepatitis C
- HIV-positive people
- Children born to mothers who have hepatitis C
- Health/social care workers that are exposed to infected blood or body fluids at work
- Anyone who received a tattoo with needles that were not sterilised properly
- Those travelling or residing in countries with high rates of infection



Testing

Hepatitis tests are simple, painless, confidential and free at public STI Clinics.

Tests for hepatitis C are free at public STI testing Clinics. Ask for a free test if you think you have been at risk. For a list of clinics see www.hepinfo.ie.

The test for hepatitis C is two blood tests: one to check if a person has ever had hepatitis C, and a second to test if a person currently has hepatitis C. It is very important that a person gets both tests.

Treatment

The goal of new hepatitis C treatments is cure.

Do You Know?

There is currently no vaccine for hepatitis C.

There are two main phases of Hepatitis C infection: acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term).

Treatment for hepatitis C is dependent on:

- Whether it is an acute or chronic infection
- What genotype you are infected with; (there are currently 6 different genotypes of Hepatitis C. Genotypes 1 and 3 are the most common in Ireland)
- The progression of liver disease

More information

www.hepinfo.ie for information on hepatitis C and free testing.

Freephone the Hepatitis Helpline on **1800 459 459** for confidential support and information.

DEVELOPED BY:

Dublin
AIDS
Alliance 

 **Community**
Response

UISCE
*Union for Improved Services,
Communication and Education*