

Viral Hepatitis C

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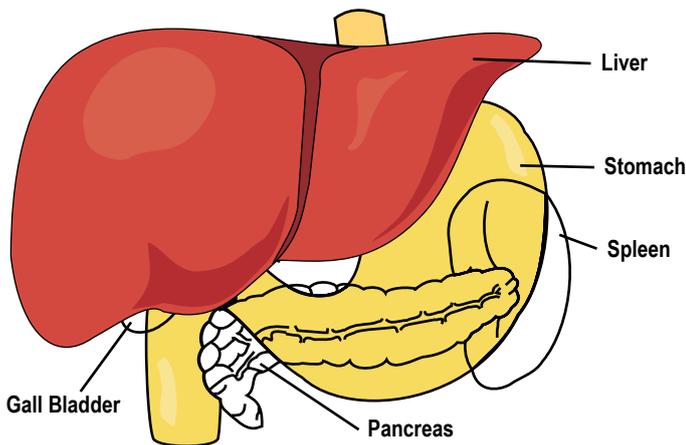
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What is the liver?

The liver is the second largest organ of the body. It performs numerous tasks like storing vital energy and nutrients, manufacturing proteins and enzymes necessary for good health, protecting the body from disease, and also helps remove harmful toxins, like alcohol, from the body.



What is viral hepatitis?

Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. Viral hepatitis is caused by infection of the liver with one of the five hepatitis viruses – A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis D can occur only in the presence of hepatitis B.

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C results from an infection with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It is a contagious liver disease i.e. it can spread from person to person.

It can be mild in severity and may last for a few weeks. Generally it is a serious, lifelong illness. Thus hepatitis C can be either acute

or short lasting and chronic or lasting for a longer time/lifelong.

How can you get hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C virus is transmitted through:

- Direct contact with infectious blood
- From infected mothers to infants
- Unsafe sexual intercourse
- Transfusions of infected blood and blood products
- Sharing razors or other personal items with an infected person
- Being pierced or tattooed with contaminated instruments
- Contaminated injections during medical procedures
- Needle-stick injuries
- Sharing contaminated needles

Can a person spread hepatitis C and not know it?

Yes, because most people infected with hepatitis C do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected, until they have symptoms of cirrhosis or liver cancer many years later.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?

Symptoms when present can include:

- Yellow discoloration of skin and eyes
- Abdominal swelling or severe abdominal pain
- Prolonged itching of skin
- Very dark colored urine or pale stools, or passage of bloody or tar like stools

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- Constant fatigue, tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Disturbed sleep
- Loss of sex drive

Who all should be tested for hepatitis C?

- Did you get blood transfusion with blood that was not tested for hepatitis C and B?
 - Have you received injections with glass syringes or used syringes?
 - Do you have HIV?
 - Do you have tattoos?
 - Were your liver enzymes raised?
 - Do you have unexplainable fatigue, tiredness?
 - Have you had body piercing done?
 - Are you a healthcare worker, police personnel fire fighter?
 - Are you in contact with blood at the workplace?
 - Do you live with a person who is hepatitis C positive?
 - Do you share items such as nail clippers, razors, tooth brush etc?
 - Have you had a hemodialysis?
 - Have you had an organ transplant?
- If your answer is yes.... Then get yourself tested today!

What is the treatment for chronic hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is treatable. The choice of whether to treat or not to treat and when to start treatment lies with the treating

doctor. The aim of treatment is to prevent life-threatening consequences of hepatitis C.

General measures

- Test for HIV, hepatitis A and B
- Vaccinate against hepatitis A and B
- Discuss HCV status with sexual partner
- Cover all wounds
- Avoid alcohol
- Exercise depending on energy levels
- Eat nutritious, well-balanced diet
- Keep a healthy weight
- Avoid taking any medications from any other doctor/prescription/non prescription medications.
- Alternative medicines also should be avoided

Medications

- Oral Medications like ribavirin and injections like interferons are available
- The patients should take the medicines in the prescribed dose as well as duration.
- Around half the treated patients will clear the hepatitis C virus. This depends on the genotype of hepatitis C virus.
- The side effects of interferons include fatigue, body aches, and mood changes, including depression.
- Ribavirin damages red blood cells and cause anemia and birth defects if taken by pregnant women.

Can hepatitis C be prevented?

Unlike hepatitis A and B, unfortunately there is no vaccine available for hepatitis C.