

# IF YOU HAVE HEP C

Avoid alcohol, eat well and remember to give your liver time to rest and repair. Drink lots of water!

The liver is the only organ in the body that grows new tissue. Eat more fruits and vegetables and shy away from heavy red meats and greasy foods.

Remember to see a doctor on a regular basis to have lab work done. Ask your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist about other drugs you may be on. Only take prescriptions the way the doctor or nurse says to.

**Most people who get Hep C don't even know they have it until they get really sick so it's important to stay healthy.**

All drugs do something to your body or brain. You can't always know what will happen, so take care and get some advice.



# IMPORTANT FACTS

Approximately 250,000 people in Canada are infected with Hep C. Some of these people will get liver disease (like cancer or **cirrhosis**).

Cirrhosis means scarring in your liver. When you have Hep C for a long time the virus has more time to cause more scarring.

Many people with Hep C **don't get any symptoms and feel fine for many years** (they may not know they are infected).

Alcohol can be far more dangerous for your liver than any other drug. Try to limit your use to 7 drinks per week or less.

Even without symptoms, a person with Hep C can continue to spread the virus to other people through blood-to-blood contact.

Treatment for Hep C is available and can help some people get rid of the virus. Speak with your nurse or doctor for more information on different Hep C treatment options.

Hep C is different than hepatitis A or hepatitis B. Ask your nurse or doctor how to protect yourself from the different viruses.

You can get infected with another strain of Hep C (there are 6 strains).

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## STRAIGHT UP ON HEP C



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## WHAT IS HEP C?

Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a virus that causes liver disease. Your liver is your body's filtering system. If your liver is sick, you can get sick too.

**There is no vaccine to stop Hep C but there is treatment.**

## WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO GET IT?

Since Hep C is usually spread through direct blood-to-blood contact, you can get it if you:

- share needles, spoons, straws, crack pipes & other drug-related equipment.
- share a razor, toothbrush, dental floss, tooth picks, nail clippers or other tools that can cause bleeding, with someone who has Hep C.
- get tattoos or body parts pierced with used needles and unsterile or used tattoo needles and ink.

## USING NEEDLES:

**Bleach, ammonia and boiling water do not kill Hep C.**

**If you use with other people, make sure they have their own area for fixing.**

- Don't touch or use anyone else's works
- Be careful about blood
- Have your own needle
- Have your own equipment: lighter, tie, filter, water, cooker, matches. . . and don't let anyone else use your things.

## ONCE INFECTED YOU MAY BEGIN TO SHOW SYMPTOMS LIKE:

jaundice (yellowish skin or eyes), chronic fatigue, muscle aches and joint pain, nausea or loss of appetite, dark urine (pee)



Take your used needles to a needle exchange and stock up on clean ones while you're there. You can often get clean needles, piercing kits and condoms at the nearest community health centre, youth agency, or clinic.

If you have ever shared a needle in your life, even once, it is important to get tested. Blood can also be found on spoons, straws, mixing dishes, swabs, ties and crack pipes. **You can get more information on testing for Hep C at your nearest community health centre, youth agency or clinic.**

## TO PREVENT HEP C

Avoid all blood contact as you would with HIV and use a needle exchange program.

Hep C is a much stronger virus than HIV and can stay alive for longer periods of time when exposed to air, heat and water, so use new piercing needles and tattooing equipment.

When getting tattooed be sure that all the equipment is autoclaved and sterilized properly. Piercing should be done with new needles, forceps and jewellery (don't reuse needles and ink). Ask your tattoo and piercing artist if you can watch them open the package.

Hep C can also be passed on by having unprotected sex (anal, vaginal, and/or oral), especially if blood is present.

