

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that usually causes chronic liver inflammation leading to serious liver damage. The hepatitis C virus (HCV) spreads through contaminated blood, contaminated syringe & unprotected sex. Can also rarely be transmitted from mother to foetus during delivery.

Today, chronic HCV is usually curable with oral medication.

Most people with HCV don't know they're infected, mainly because they have no symptoms, which can take decades to appear.

Untreated chronic hepatitis C increases your risk of developing cirrhosis — a condition that causes permanent scarring of the liver, liver failure or liver cancer.

Chronic hepatitis C is usually a "silent" infection for many years, until the virus damages the liver enough to cause the signs and symptoms of liver disease. Among these signs and symptoms are:

Bleeding easily, Bruising easily, Fatigue, Poor appetite, Yellow discoloration of the skin and eyes (jaundice), Dark-colored urine, Itchy skin, Fluid buildup in your abdomen (ascites), Swelling in your legs, Weight loss, Confusion, drowsiness and slurred speech (hepatic encephalopathy), Spider-like blood vessels on your skin (spider angiomas).

Every chronic hepatitis C infection starts with an acute phase. Acute hepatitis C usually goes undiagnosed because it rarely causes symptoms. When signs and symptoms are present, they may include jaundice, along with fatigue, nausea, fever and muscle aches. Acute symptoms appear one to three months after exposure to the virus and last two weeks to three months.

Acute hepatitis C infection doesn't always become chronic. Some people clear HCV from their bodies after the acute phase, an outcome known as spontaneous viral clearance.

Your risk of hepatitis C infection is increased if you:

- Are a health care worker who has been exposed to infected blood, which may happen if an infected needle pierces your skin
- IV drug abusers
- Have HIV
- Piercing or tattoo in an unclean environment using unsterile equipment
- Blood transfusion or organ transplant
- Hemodialysis

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Several blood tests are performed to test for HCV infection.

LFT

Viral serology including viral load & genotype

Ultra sonography

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You can take steps to reduce the risk of passing hepatitis C to others.

- Don't share razors or toothbrushes.
- Don't donate blood, body organs or semen.
- Stop drinking alcohol
- Avoid medications that may cause liver damage. Stop Self medication.

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If you have hepatitis, you usually don't need a special diet. Just trying to eat healthy and not being overweight and avoid alcohol is all that is needed.

General dietary advice

- Eat regular & balanced meals.
- Maintain healthy calorie intake.
- Eat whole-grain cereals, breads, and grains.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Get adequate protein.
- Avoid fatty, salty, and sugary foods
- Drink enough fluids

Cautions:

- Avoid alcohol
- Be careful with dietary supplements