

hepCinfo

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CATIE - www.catie.ca - www.hepCinfo.ca - 1-800-263-1638 (CATIE accepts collect calls from prisoners in Canada)

Should you get tested?

You may not know you have hepatitis C because often there are no symptoms and you may feel fine. By the time you feel sick, a lot of damage may already be done to your liver. Some people find out they have Hep C when their doctor tests them during a routine check-up, some people find out when they go to donate blood and their blood is tested for the virus, and some people ask to be tested.

It is recommended that you consider getting tested for Hep C if:

- You think you have been exposed to the hepatitis C virus either recently or in the past through contact with someone else's blood.
- You participated in a risk activity in the past, even if it was just one time.
- You are experiencing symptoms consistent with liver disease.
- Your doctor has told you after a routine check-up that your liver enzyme levels are outside of the normal range. This could indicate liver trouble, so you may want to get tested to see if you have a hepatitis infection.
- You come from a country outside Canada where Hep C is common.
- You had a blood transfusion in Canada before 1992.

- You are HIV-positive. It is recommended that all people who are HIV-positive get tested for Hep C at least once.

WHY GET TESTED?

Getting tested can be stressful because it's tough to think that you might have Hep C. Or maybe you are sure you have it and think you don't need a test. Maybe you are worried that if you test positive, you will be forced to do things you do not want to do or you are worried that people will treat you differently if they know you have Hep C.

The important thing to remember is that testing is the only way to know for sure if you have Hep C. You might find out you don't have it. That can be a giant relief and you can learn how to avoid the virus in the future. Or you might find out that you do have Hep C. If this is the case, no one can force you to make changes you do not want to make, but you can learn options that will help keep you and your liver healthy. Who you tell is up to you, and if you know you have it there are things you can do to protect others from getting Hep C. Any way you look at it, it's better to know.

WHERE TO GET TESTED

If you have any of the risk factors for Hep C, or even if you're worried about it, you can get tested. There is no charge for this test. Go to a community health centre, healthy sexuality clinic, drop-in clinic, needle exchange program or your doctor's office. There are many places you can go for help, and your information will be kept private. Some places will test you even if you don't have a health card.

BEFORE YOU GET TESTED

Getting tested for Hep C infection is an important step in helping you make good choices about taking care of your liver and your health. Before you get tested, your healthcare provider should:

- tell you what each test is for
- explain how the tests will be done and when
- explain that testing is confidential but not anonymous
- ask for your permission to have the tests done
- give you information on what the test results may mean for your health

Always make sure you get this information before going ahead and getting tested.

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INTRO TO HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C infection is caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Worldwide, about 170 million people have Hep C. In Canada, about 250,000 people are living with Hep C, with 110,000 in Ontario. Roughly 20% of people don't know they have the virus.

You can get Hep C when blood containing the hepatitis C virus gets in your blood. In Canada, the highest-risk activity for getting Hep C is using drug equipment—needles, syringes, swabs, filters, spoons and water—that has been used by someone else. Taking care to avoid contact with materials that could have blood on them, even if you can't see any blood, will help you stay safe.

The Hep C virus attacks your liver. Your body can try to fight the virus—and sometimes it can win—but the hepatitis C virus is very strong. Ordinary medicines like antibiotics do not kill viruses. However, there are special medications to treat Hep C that work for many people.

GENOTYPE: 6 TYPES OF HEP C

There are at least six different types, or strains, of the hepatitis C virus. They are called genotypes. The particular genotype a person has will affect his or her treatment decisions.

STAGES: DIFFERENT OUTCOMES OF HEP C INFECTION

There are two stages of hepatitis C infection:

1. Acute infection: The first is the "acute" infection stage, which happens when people are first infected and can last from a few weeks to six months. Sometimes the body is able to clear the virus on its own during this stage.
2. Chronic infection: The next stage for many people is long-term or "chronic" infection, which happens when a person has had Hep C for six months or more. Chronic infection is a concern because even though a person may not feel sick, the Hep C virus can be damaging their liver.

Let's say 10 people have become infected with the Hep C virus. Two of the 10 will recover from

the infection, or "clear" the virus, during the acute phase. That means their body fought the hepatitis C virus and won.

The other eight people will go on to develop chronic Hep C (which means that the hepatitis C virus is in their blood and liver more than six months after infection). It can take as long as 20 to 30 years for the virus to cause serious liver disease or damage. This damage causes scarring.

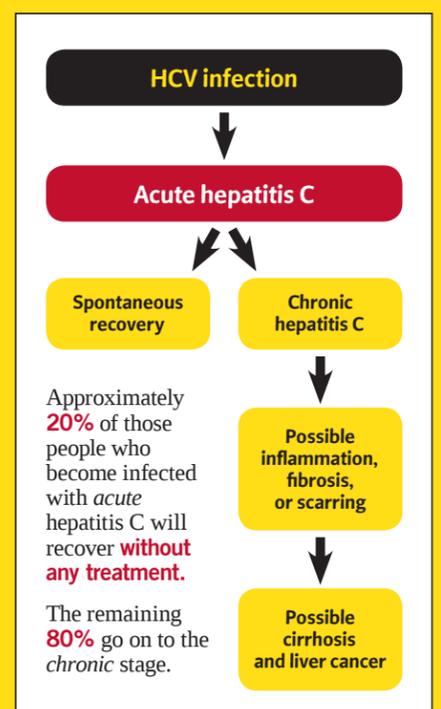
Of those eight people with chronic infection, one or two will have enough damage to their liver over the years that the liver will not work as well as it should. This is called cirrhosis. If the disease continues to get worse, people can also get liver cancer or liver failure.

LIVING WITH HEP C: SHOW YOUR LIVER SOME LOVE!

If you have Hep C, you can take steps to reduce harm and prevent liver damage. You might:

- see a healthcare provider
- find out about treatment for Hep C
- learn tips for living with Hep C and preventing liver damage—for example, you may choose to drink less alcohol because alcohol can damage your liver even more

These things can help you stay healthy for a long time with Hep C.



Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3B1

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CATIE Ordering Centre No: ATI-70117 (aussi disponible en français, ATI-70118)

Your liver and how it works

Your liver is an amazing part of the body. Located on the right-hand side of your abdomen just below the ribcage, the liver acts like a factory that runs 24 hours a day.

It processes virtually everything you eat, drink, breathe in or rub on your skin—and that’s just some of the more than 500 different things the liver does.

Every day, your liver helps your body by providing it with energy, fighting off infections and toxins, helping clot the blood, regulating hormones, and much, much more. To give you an idea of the liver’s critical roles, here are a few things it does:

- Breaks down food and turns it into energy
- Helps make proteins that repair damaged tissues
- Processes and neutralizes drugs and alcohol to make them less harmful to your body
- Makes and regulates hormones including sex hormones
- Stores essential vitamins and minerals, such as iron and copper
- Helps the body get rid of waste products

For someone living with hepatitis C, keeping your liver as healthy as possible is very important.

Therefore, you need to know what can damage your liver and what can help your liver. At the same time, remember to take care of your health and take steps so you don’t pass on the virus to someone else.

HOW TO LIVE HEALTHY WITH HEP C:

Good nutrition

- Eat healthy foods, especially food that is low in fat, sugar and salt.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water every day.
- Maintain a healthy weight and try not to become overweight.
- If you’re overweight, try to lose weight.
- Ask your doctor or healthcare provider about taking vitamins.

Exercise

- Light or moderate exercise will keep you fit and give you energy.
- Exercise will help reduce stress and prevent weight gain.

Coffee

- Some studies show that drinking 1-2 cups of coffee per day can help your liver. Drinking more than that can have side effects such as addiction and an increased risk for high blood pressure, especially if you

drink it with too much sugar and cream.

More ways to help you live healthy with hepatitis C

- Check with your doctor before taking any kind of medicine, including over-the-counter medications, herbs and ‘natural’ products.
- See your doctor regularly—keep your appointments. If you can’t, call and reschedule.
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.
- Join a support group or talk to other people who have Hep C. Reaching out will help.

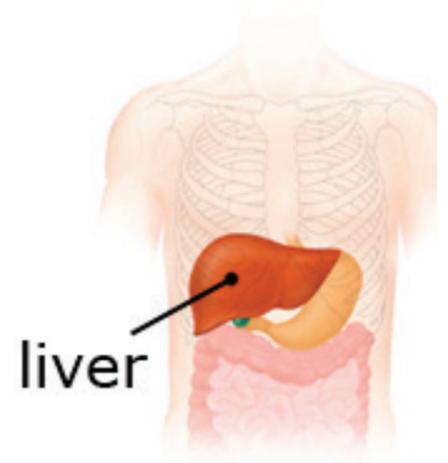
WHAT CAN BE HARMFUL TO YOUR LIVER?

Alcohol

- Alcohol harms the liver, so cutting down or stopping drinking alcohol altogether will be good for your liver.
- If you have a hard time trying to cut back or quit, ask for help. Your healthcare provider or community health centre will give you information on where to go for help.

Smoking

- Smoking has been found to harm the liver, especially if you smoke and drink alcohol. If you can, quit smoking or smoke less.



- Smoking also has other risks—it increases your chances of other healthcare problems such as lung cancer and heart disease.
- Most provinces and territories have a smoker’s helpline.

Over-the-counter painkillers

- Over-the-counter painkillers such as Tylenol and Advil can be dangerous for your liver if you take more than the recommended dose. Talk to your healthcare worker about the right dose for you and if you’re taking more than the recommended dose, you can also talk to him or her about safer ways to manage pain. 

WORDSEARCH

H	E	P	A	T	I	T	I	S
L	C	U	R	M	J	B	A	S
C	I	N	O	R	H	C	E	E
A	L	V	F	N	K	O	H	I
E	S	F	E	A	F	F	C	T
S	V	P	E	R	P	F	V	A
I	N	K	P	O	T	E	R	C
P	R	O	H	C	L	E	L	Z
G	E	N	O	T	Y	P	E	A

LIVER

Your liver is an amazing part of the body. Located on the right-hand side of your abdomen just below the ribcage, the liver acts like a factory that runs 24 hours a day. It processes virtually everything you eat, drink, breathe in or rub on your skin—and that’s just some of the more than 500 different things the liver does.

CHRONIC

There are two phases of Hep C infection: Acute and Chronic. If the virus doesn’t clear from the body after 6 months, it’s considered Chronic Hep C.

COFFEE

Coffee (without cream and sugar) can help your liver be healthy. It may also help people who are on Hep C treatment clear the virus.

INK POT

Hep C can be spread during a tattoo or piercing when materials such as ink and ink pots have been used before. Fresh ink and a new ink pot will help prevent the spread of Hep C.

HCV

HCV (hepatitis C virus) is the virus that causes Hep C. HCV is spread through blood-to-blood contact.

GENOTYPE

Genotype is used to describe the strain of a virus, based on genetic makeup. There are 6 major hepatitis C genotypes (numbered 1-6). In Canada, genotype 1 is the most common.

HEPATITIS

Hepatitis in general refers to any inflammation of the liver. It can have a variety of causes, including viruses, medicines, alcohol, chemicals and other toxins.

CATIE

CATIE is Canada’s source for information about Hep C and HIV. Give us a call at 1-800-263-1638 or email us at questions@catie.ca and we can help you find the information you’re looking for.

GET THE FULL PICTURE. GET THE RIGHT TESTS. HEP C

www.hepCinfo.ca • 1-800-263-1638

Continued from page 1

AFTER YOU GET TESTED

When your test results are ready, your healthcare provider should take time to tell you about your results and what they mean, including the results of the antibody test and the results of the RNA test. You have the right to this information. If you don't hear from your healthcare provider, contact him or her to make sure you get your test results.

If the test results show there is no Hep C virus in your body, your healthcare provider should talk to you about:

- protecting yourself from getting infected with Hep C or other infections like Hep A and B or HIV in the future
- looking after your health and visiting your healthcare provider regularly

If the test results show for sure that Hep C virus is present in your blood, your healthcare provider should talk to you about:

- taking care of your liver so you don't cause it more harm
- protecting others from getting Hep C
- protecting yourself from getting another strain of Hep C or another infection like HIV or hepatitis B
- treatment for Hep C and where to get more information about it

WHAT ARE THE TESTS?

The blood tests for Hep C will:

- determine if you have the virus
- determine which Hep C virus (genotype) you have
- determine the amount of virus in your blood
- determine if the virus is damaging your liver

Doctors can only get the whole picture by doing a number of tests.

First test: This test looks for the antibodies to Hep C in your blood. If this test is positive, it means you have been exposed to the hepatitis

C virus in the past and will have antibodies for the rest of your life. This test does not tell you if there is active virus in your body. You need the second test to find this out.

Second test: This test checks for the presence of the Hep C virus itself. It is called an RNA test or a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. If it is positive, you are infected with Hep C. If it is negative, you don't have the virus and are not chronically infected.

If the test results show that you don't have Hep C, you can still get infected with the virus if you are exposed to it at another time—even if you have antibodies.

Viral load test: This test is to check how much virus is in your blood, but it doesn't tell you how long you have been infected. It is often done at the same time as the RNA test.

Genotype test: This test checks to see which type of Hep C virus you have. Knowing the genotype is important when it comes to making decisions about treatment. As with the viral load test, you don't need to have more blood taken for this test because it's usually done at the same time as the RNA test. The genotype does not impact how the virus affects your liver, only its response to therapy.

More tests: There are other tests your healthcare provider might do to see how the virus is affecting your liver and the rest of your body. He or she might recommend changes to your lifestyle or that you start or stop Hep C treatment based on the results of a test. Every person is different, so the tests you have and how often you have them will be unique to you.

Most tests are covered by provincial health insurance but some tests are not. Before you agree to a test, ask your healthcare provider if there is a charge for it. If there is, you can ask if there is a different test that is covered by insurance.

WHAT CAN CATIE DO FOR YOU TODAY?

CATIE IN PRINT

- *TreatmentUpdate*
- *Managing your health: a guide for people living with HIV*
- *Living with HIV: Starting points*
- *HIV and Aging*
- *Hepatitis C: The Basic Facts*
- And many more...

CATIE ONLINE

- Downloadable PDFs
- The CATIE Ordering Centre
- E-learning modules: basic information about living with HIV in an interactive and engaging format
- Online subscriptions to our publications
- Your HIV and hepatitis C questions answered at questions@catie.ca

CATIE BY PHONE

- Toll-free, confidential inquiry service

Phone Service Hours	Monday	Tuesday to Thursday
British Columbia, Yukon	7 am – 6 pm	7 am – 3 pm
Alberta, Northwest Territories	8 am – 7 pm	8 am – 4 pm
Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut West	9 am – 8 pm	9 am – 5 pm
Ontario, Quebec, Nunavut East	10 am – 9 pm	10 am – 6 pm
Atlantic Canada	11 am – 10 pm	11 am – 7 pm
Newfoundland	11:30 am – 10:30 pm	11:30 am – 7:30 pm

1.800.263.1638
WWW.CATIE.CA

HEPATITIS C
www.hepCinfo.ca

CATIE Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information

FASTFACTS

500+ The number of functions the liver performs. It helps fight infection, cleans toxins from the blood, manufactures proteins, controls blood sugar, clots blood and produces bile.

70-80% The estimated percentage of people newly infected with Hep C who have no symptoms.

15-25% The percentage of people with Hep C who clear the virus from their bodies without treatment.

0.78% The estimated percentage of Canadians living with Hep C in 2007.

7,945 The estimated number of Canadians newly infected with Hep C in 2007.

21% The estimated percentage of Canadians with Hep C who don't know they are infected.

Co-infection with HIV

More and more people with Hep C also have HIV. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a virus that attacks a person's immune system and causes AIDS. AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Here is a brief introduction to HIV and some important things to know about HIV and Hep C co-infection (having two or more infections at the same time). For more information on HIV, visit www.catie.ca.

WHAT HIV DOES

HIV attacks and weakens the immune system. Your immune system helps your body by fighting off germs, like viruses and bacteria. When the immune system is weakened, it is easier for germs to attack your body and make you sick. When your immune system isn't working well, you can get sick from specific illnesses your body used to be able to fight off. Generally, if you have HIV and you get sick with one of these diseases, you are considered to have AIDS.

When you have HIV, it's important to have regular checkups with a doctor, so he or she can measure how much HIV is in your blood

and see how your immune system is doing. That way you and your doctor can decide when is the best time to start treatment so that you stay healthy.

HOW DO YOU GET HIV?

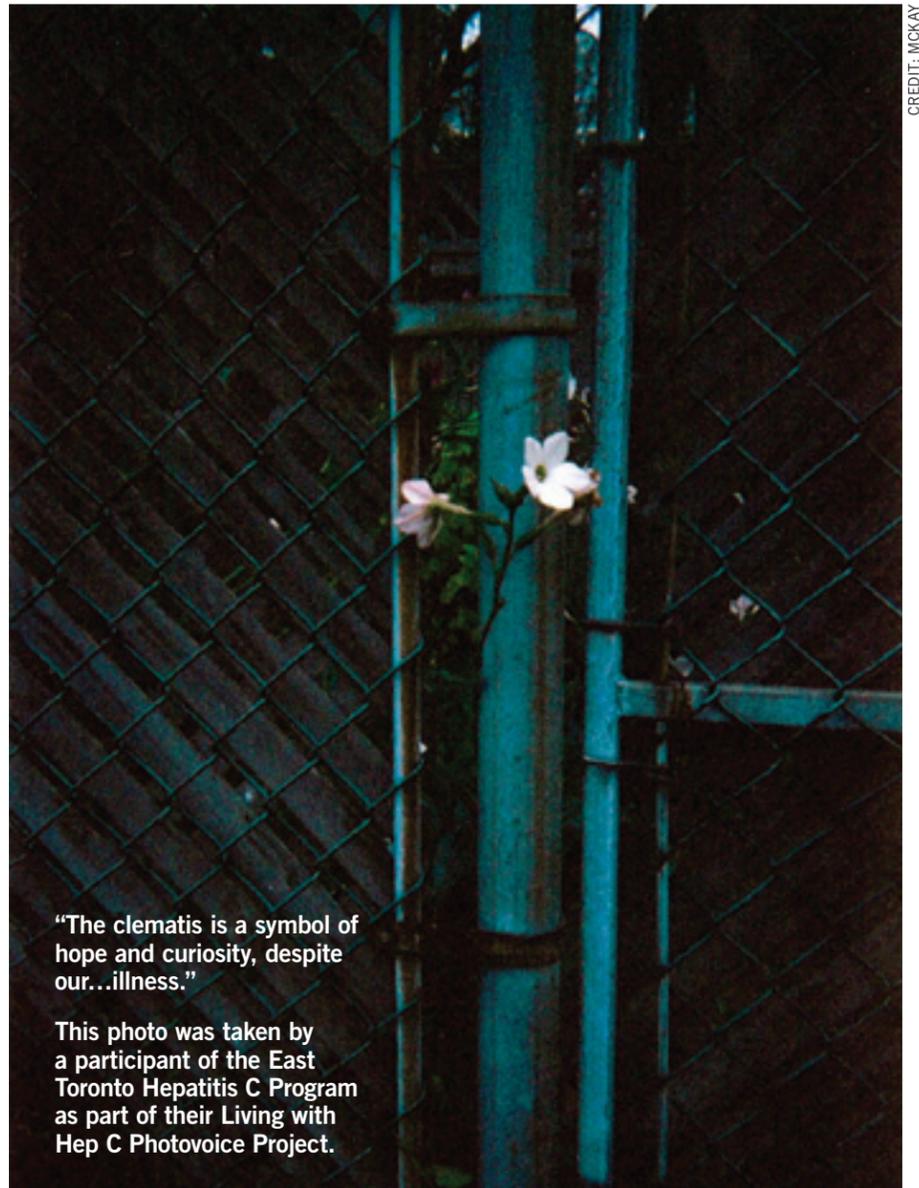
HIV is carried in five body fluids: blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids and breast milk. You can get HIV when these fluids get into your body. In Canada, this usually happens in the following ways:

- through unprotected sex with a person who has HIV
- by reusing drug-use equipment already used by someone who has HIV
- mother-to-child transmission during childbirth or breast-feeding, if the mother has HIV
- from a blood transfusion in Canada before 1985

HIV enters the body in many of the same ways as Hep C, so you can take the same steps to protect yourself from both Hep C and HIV.

HIV TREATMENT

There is no cure for HIV, but there are medicines that are very effective at fighting HIV. These medicines can keep the virus from weakening your immune system



"The clematis is a symbol of hope and curiosity, despite our...illness."

This photo was taken by a participant of the East Toronto Hepatitis C Program as part of their Living with Hep C Photovoice Project.

CREDIT: MCKAY

Looking for **Hep C testing** in your area?

Want to find a **needle exchange** or other harm reduction services near you?



Call us at **1-800-263-1638** or visit CATIE's online directory of Hep C services at

www.hepCinfo.ca

COMPARING HEP C AND HIV

	Hep C	HIV
Transmission	Through contact with infected blood.	Through contact with infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids or breast milk.
How most people get it in Canada	Using drug-use equipment already used by someone else, particularly equipment for injection drug use.	Unprotected sex. Using drug-use equipment already used by someone else, particularly equipment for injection drug use.
Testing	Antibody test looks for exposure. RNA test looks for infection.	Positive antibody test shows infection.
Treatment goal	Treatment is available and may clear the virus from the body.	Treatment is available to keep the virus under control. You can be infected with a type of HIV that does not respond to treatment. This is called a drug-resistant strain of HIV.
How long it takes to treat	Hep C treatment takes six months to a year depending on the strain of Hep C that you have.	Once it is started, HIV treatment is life-long.
How long it survives outside the body	Hep C can survive for at least four days outside the body.	HIV dies within minutes in open air outside the body.
Risk of re-infection	There is no immunity to Hep C. You can be re-infected even if you already cleared the virus.	You have HIV for life but can sometimes be infected with more than one strain.
Vaccine	There is currently no vaccine available for Hep C.	There is currently no vaccine available for HIV.
Number of people living with the infection (estimates)	Canada: 250,000 infections Worldwide: 170 million infections	Canada: 65,000 infections Worldwide: 33 million infections

and can keep you healthy for a very long time. If you have HIV, talk to a doctor or healthcare worker to find out more about HIV treatment. CATIE's website (www.catie.ca) also has more information on HIV and HIV treatment.

HEP C AND HIV CO-INFECTION

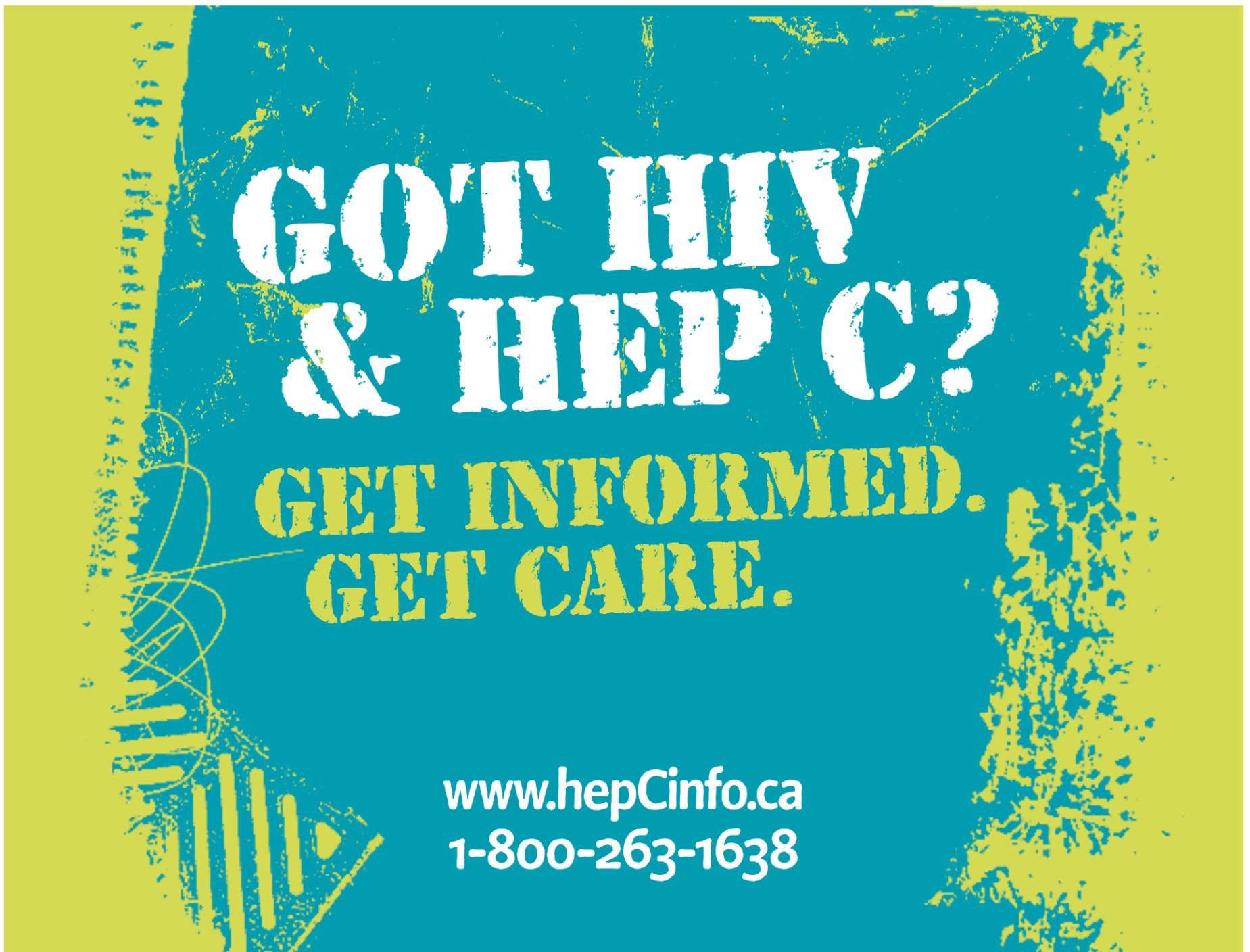
If you have either HIV or Hep C,

you are at risk for the other, as both can enter the body the same way. HIV and Hep C are both blood-borne diseases, which means that they can be transmitted when blood carrying the virus gets into your bloodstream. Sexual transmission of Hep C is rare but the risk increases if you have HIV. Taking care to not use materials contaminated with blood will help you stay safe.

About 13,000 Canadians who have Hep C also have HIV. You may be co-infected and not know it because both viruses can silently cause harm before symptoms develop. The only way to know is by getting an HIV test and the right Hep C tests.

Being co-infected with HIV and Hep C is a serious situation because it means that the chances of developing liver disease are

higher. It also makes decisions about treatment for both infections more complicated. Because of this, all of the suggestions for reducing harm and promoting general health are even more important for people who have both infections. 



GOT HIV & HEP C?

GET INFORMED. GET CARE.

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Signs & symptoms

People who are infected with Hep C are often asymptomatic (show no symptoms) in the beginning and may carry the virus for many years before symptoms develop.

Only about one-third of people show symptoms during acute infection. These symptoms can include: fatigue; tenderness or an aching feeling on the right side of the abdomen; decreased appetite perhaps with weight loss; flu-like symptoms; nausea; tendency to bruise or bleed easily; jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes); rash; dark-coloured urine; and light or clay-coloured stools. These symptoms often go away after a short time.

If the disease progresses to chronic infection, it can take years before symptoms develop. Symptoms of advanced liver disease caused by long-term chronic infection can include: jaundice; ascites (swelling in the abdomen); and blood in stool or vomit. Sleep disturbances, depression, weight loss, dry or itchy skin, and “brain fog” are also found in people with chronic Hep C but the cause of these symptoms remains uncertain.

Some people decide to get tested when they show symptoms but because there are rarely symptoms with Hep C infection, getting tested is the only way to know for sure and is encouraged for anyone who may be at risk.

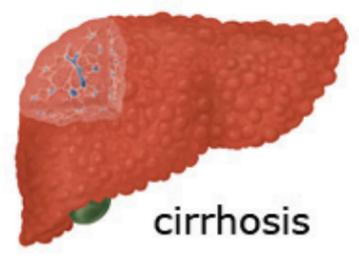
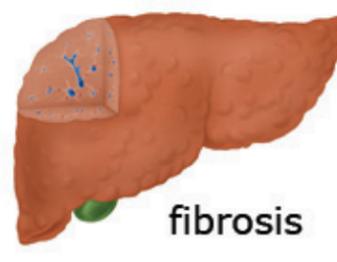
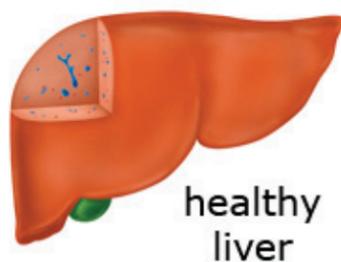
SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Hepatitis C causes changes to a person’s body and these changes can manifest themselves as signs and symptoms of the infection. Some cause discomfort and can be managed. Others are significant medical complications, such as ascites (swelling in the abdomen), jaundice (yellowing of the skin), or delayed blood clotting. Regardless of the degree of symptoms, they should be reviewed by a healthcare professional at regular intervals. If symptoms become severe, people should consider visiting a hospital emergency room.

Note: Having certain symptoms does not automatically mean a person has Hep C. People should not fixate only on Hep C and ignore other possible health problems.

Fatigue or sleeping problems may cause lack of energy and make you feel very tired. Tips:

- Get plenty of rest. Have rests when you can throughout the day and try not to do too much in a day.
- Try to get regular sleep.
- Exercise. It will help you sleep better, keep your weight at the right level, improve your



appetite, and make you feel better. Take a walk, use the stairs or do whatever you can to be active, even for just 10 minutes at a time.

Aches and pains in muscles and joints are common in some people living with Hep C. Tips:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about medications you can take to help with the pain. Be sure to take the medication as directed because excessive use of some pain medications (like Tylenol and Advil) can cause a lot of damage to your liver.

- Try mild exercise and stretching techniques.

Confusion (“brain fog”) sometimes occurs in people with Hep C. Tips:

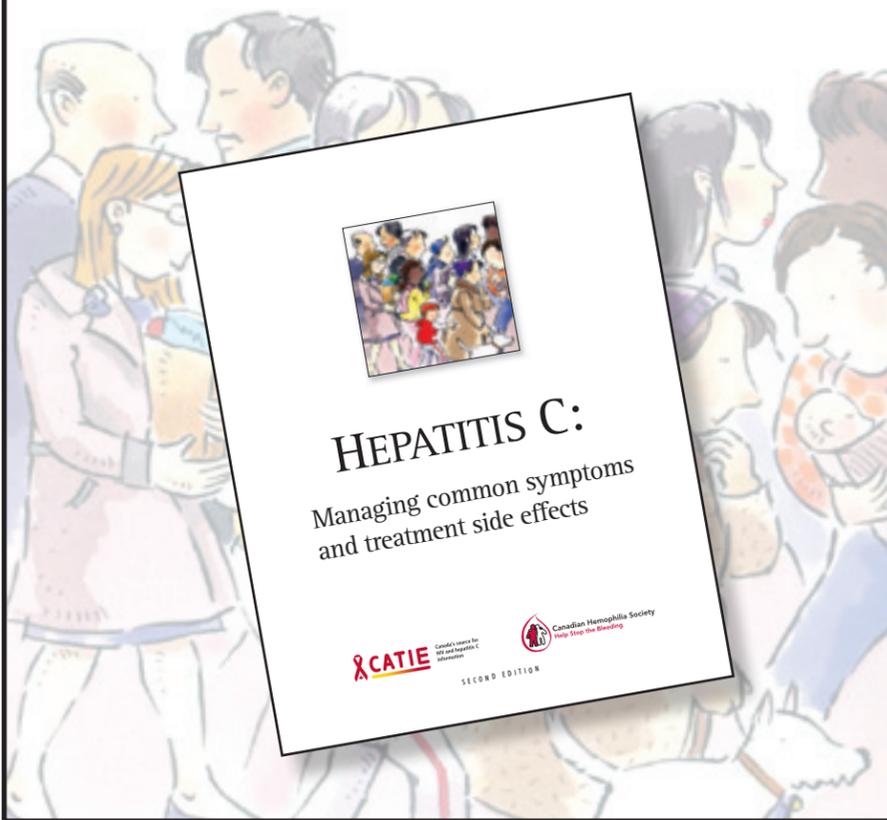
- Keep your mind active by doing puzzles, reading or doing other activities that stimulate your mind.
- Take time to relax and rest your mind.
- Try to keep track of when confusion sets in and use that time to rest. When it lifts, spend some time doing activities that need focus and concentration.

Other tips:

- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink and cigarettes you smoke to keep your liver healthier longer.
- Stay in touch with your healthcare team. They can help with different aspects of having Hep C.
- If the discomfort and pains you experience are severe, go to the emergency room without delay.

Hepatitis C: Managing Common Symptoms and Treatment Side Effects

- Contains 88 pages of practical tips for managing the symptoms of hepatitis C and the side effects of treatment
- Based on medical research and the expertise of health care service providers and, most important, other people living with hepatitis C
- Published in partnership by CATIE and the Canadian Hemophilia Society
- Includes information on websites, organizations and referrals, financial assistance and much more



Are you at risk?

Hepatitis C is spread when blood that has Hep C in it gets into your bloodstream. There are some activities that put you at high risk, others that have some risk, and some that have no risk.

infected blood, such as fisting or sex when a woman has her period. It is easier for Hep C to be passed on during sex if someone has HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.

- Getting a needle-stick injury.
- Sharing personal things—razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes—where there is a chance of contact with the blood of a person with Hep C.
- Being born to a woman who has Hep C. This is rare, but the risk is higher if the woman has both Hep C and HIV.

High risk

- Using equipment for injection drug use—needles, syringes, cookers, ties, filters, alcohol wipes and water—that was already used by someone else.
- Using other drug equipment—such as pipes and straws or bills for snorting—that was already used by someone else.
- Having a tattoo or piercing done with equipment that has not been sterilized and might have infected blood on it or using ink that might have blood in it.
- Participating in practices and rituals that involve cutting (and sharing the same cutting tool).
- Having had a blood transfusion in Canada before 1992. Since 1992, donated blood in Canada is tested for Hep C.
- Reusing needles for vaccination or medical procedures (it is rare for this to happen in Canada these days).

No risk (no blood contact)

- Hugging and kissing
- Day-to-day contact with family or friends
- Using public bathrooms

Anyone can get Hep C, but some people are more likely to be exposed to Hep C than others. Studies show that there are high rates of Hep C in people who use and inject drugs, people living on the street, Aboriginal peoples, people in prison and immigrants from countries where there are high rates of hepatitis C. The discrimination a person faces can make it harder for him or her to access services like healthcare or prevention programs and can make it easier to get Hep C. 🍷

Some risk

- Having unprotected sex that may involve contact with

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PREVENTION

Preventing the spread of Hep C is important both for people who are at risk and for people who are living with Hep C. People who do not have Hep C can take steps to avoid infection. People living with Hep C can take steps to protect others from Hep C and protect themselves from other infections (like Hep B or HIV).

You can get Hep C when blood containing the hepatitis C virus gets in your blood. Taking care to avoid contact with materials that could have blood on them, even if you can't see any blood, will help you stay safe. Think of things like:

- Using new injection, smoking or snorting equipment, every time. It's not just about new needles—if you inject drugs, use new cookers, filters, ties, acidifiers, swabs and water every time as well. If you smoke crack, crystal meth or other drugs, you can prevent getting Hep C by using your own pipe, or at least your own mouthpiece, and not sharing drug-use equipment—not even with a friend or sexual partner.
- Using new supplies for piercings every time. Some needle exchange programs give out safer piercing kits.
- Tattooing is safest in a professional studio with a sterilizer, sterile equipment and needles and new ink and ink pots.
- Having your own razors, toothbrushes and anything else that might get blood on it.
- Using a condom, glove or dental dam for sex.

Hugging and kissing, as well as sharing dishes, cups and glasses, is not a risk for Hep C (or HIV).

Safety around blood

TAKING CARE WITH BLOOD AT HOME

There are some basic rules, called “universal precautions,” about being careful around blood—the idea being to make sure your blood doesn’t come into contact with someone else’s bloodstream and vice versa. Following the rules will help keep you and others around you healthy by reducing the chance for infections like Hep C and HIV to spread.

You can:

- Take care when you clean up blood spills.
 - o Wear gloves—they should only be used once and then thrown away.
 - o If broken glass or other sharp objects are around, remove them carefully before cleaning up the blood spill.

- o Create a solution by mixing at least 1 part bleach with 9 parts water to clean the area.

- Keep cuts and sores bandaged while they heal.
- Have your own grooming supplies (razors, toothbrushes and nail clippers) and avoid using other people’s tools.

Remember, sharing dishes, cups and glasses is not a risk for Hep C.

TAKING CARE WITH BLOOD IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Healthcare workers have to follow some general rules about being careful with people’s blood or body fluids, too. These rules are called “routine practices,” “infection control procedures,” or “universal precautions,” and they serve to protect the healthcare worker and the patient. This means that



HepCBC at the Victoria Day Parade, 2011

CREDIT: RETZ

healthcare workers will wear a new pair of gloves whenever there could be blood present from anyone, not just people they know have Hep C. For example, whenever a nurse takes someone’s blood he or she will wear gloves, regardless of whether or not the person has Hep C. This

keeps any germs on the nurse’s hands away from the patient and keeps the patient’s blood away from the nurse’s hands. Some patients might think this means that their healthcare worker is afraid to touch them, but it’s really for everyone’s protection. ❤️

MEDS FOR HEP C

Right now, the treatment for Hep C is the best it has ever been. The most common effective therapy is a combination of peg- interferon (pegylated interferon) and ribavirin. Peg-interferon is sometimes called Pegasys or Pegatron depending on the company that makes the drug.

Peg-interferon is given once a week by injection with a small needle (by a healthcare provider or by you). Ribavirin is taken every day in a pill form.

GOAL OF HEP C TREATMENT

The goal of hepatitis C treatment is to achieve a sustained virological response (SVR). A sustained virological response means the body has cleared the virus. Some doctors consider this to be a cure.

However, there is no immunity against Hep C and people can be re-infected.

LENGTH OF TREATMENT

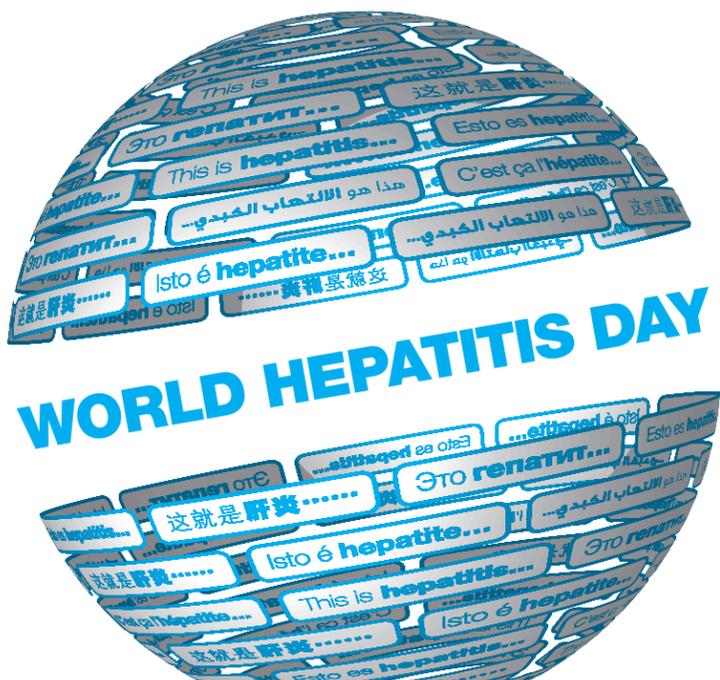
How long you take the treatment depends on which genotype (or strain) of hepatitis C virus you have.

- For genotype 1, which takes longer to respond to treatment, treatment is 48 weeks (about a year).
- For genotypes 2 and 3, which respond faster to treatment, treatment is 24 weeks (about six months).
- Genotypes 4, 5 and 6 are treated like genotype 1, about a year.

Your healthcare provider will be able to tell you which genotype you have. Most people in Canada have genotype 1.

JULY 28TH IS WORLD HEPATITIS DAY!

KNOW IT. CONFRONT IT.



HEPATITIS C

YOU CAN HAVE IT AND NOT KNOW IT.

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