

More Information On Hepatitis C

ACRIA (AIDS Community Research Initiative of America):

212-924-3934
www.acria.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hepatitis information line:

888-443-7232 (English) or
800-344-7432 (Español)
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

L.O.L.A. (Latino Organization for Liver Awareness):

888-367-5652
www.lola-national.org

NATAP (National AIDS Treatment and Advocacy Project):

212-219-0106
www.natap.org

National HCV Prison Coalition:

1-866-HEPINFO
www.hcvinprison.org

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:

Hepatitis C Program: 212-788-4711
www.nyc.gov/health

For copies of this brochure and other
educational materials, call 212-427-5120.



THE NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
and MENTAL HYGIENE

If You Have Hepatitis C

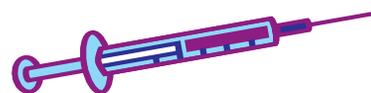
What You Need To Know

KNOW THE FACTS

Hepatitis C is a Liver Disease Caused by the Hepatitis C Virus

How do people get it?

Hepatitis C is spread by direct contact with the blood of an infected person through an opening in the skin or mucous membrane. Today, most people get hepatitis C by sharing infected needles or works.



How serious is hepatitis C?

- It can be very serious for some people but not for others.
- Most people who get infected with hepatitis C have it for the rest of their lives (called chronic hepatitis C).
- After many years, hepatitis C infection can lead to cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver cancer, and possibly death.
- Everyone who has hepatitis C should see a doctor.

HEPATITIS C IS **NOT** SPREAD BY:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| - Casual contact | - Sneezing |
| - Breastfeeding | - Coughing |
| - Hugging | - Sharing food or drinks |

What if I don't feel sick?

It's still very important to see a doctor. Many people with chronic hepatitis C feel okay even though they have liver damage. Symptoms such as nausea and vomiting may not appear until the liver damage is very advanced.

Can I get treated for it?

YES. There is medication that can rid the body of hepatitis C in up to half of the people who take it.

For some people, the treatment is difficult and can have many side effects. Talk with your doctor.

KNOW
the facts

TAKE ACTION
to protect yourself

STAY HEALTHY
to live happily

TAKE ACTION

Protect Your Liver

Alcohol is poisonous to the liver. Drinking alcohol is known to increase liver damage in people who have hepatitis C.

Avoid alcohol. Even a little bit can hurt you.

Get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

See a doctor regularly, even if you don't feel sick.

Check with your doctor before taking any over-the-counter or herbal medicines. Some can cause liver damage.

Join a support group to discuss and share information about hepatitis C.

Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.

Avoid Spreading Hepatitis C to Others

Avoid injecting drugs. Hepatitis C spreads through injection drug use, much more easily than HIV. Snorting or smoking drugs instead of shooting them reduces the risk of spreading hepatitis C to others.

Don't share toothbrushes, razors, or other personal care items that may have blood on them.

Only get tattoos and body piercing done by a professional in a specialized setting.

Cover your cuts and open sores with bandages.

Practice safer sex by using latex condoms.

Avoid sexual acts that can tear body tissues and draw blood (anal sex, fisting, etc.), without lube, condoms or other barriers.

Clean up blood spills right away with bleach.

Don't share straws if you snort drugs. Blood on the straw may spread the virus.

Don't donate your blood, sperm, or organs.

KNOW THE FACTS

If You Have HIV

HIV often makes liver damage from hepatitis C worse.

- If you have hepatitis C and HIV, find a doctor with experience treating both.
- Some HIV medications can damage your liver. It's very important to see your doctor regularly.

If You're Pregnant

- Babies born to women with hepatitis C infection rarely become infected. However, they should be tested for the virus and receive proper medical care.
- Taking hepatitis C medications while pregnant can cause birth defects.

Breastfeeding your baby is good, even if you have hepatitis C. You can't spread it through breast milk.

STAY HEALTHY

Free Hepatitis A and B Vaccinations

For free hepatitis A and B vaccinations from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene clinics, **dial 311**.

How to Get Clean Syringes

To find a nearby pharmacy where you can legally buy clean syringes without a prescription call:

NYS Department of Health
1-800-541-AIDS (English)
1-800-369-SIDA (Español)

Syringe exchange programs give out free injection equipment in exchange for your old syringes. For syringe exchange programs in your area call:

Harm Reduction Coalition
212-213-6376

Drug and Alcohol Treatment

For information about drug and alcohol treatment programs call:

1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638)
1-877-AYUDESE (Español)

How to stay safe if you inject drugs:

- *Use a new syringe and works EVERY TIME.*
- *Never share anything you use to inject drugs (cotton, cookers, water, cups, and ties).*
- *Wash your hands AND the injection site BEFORE AND AFTER you shoot up.*
- *Don't split drugs with a used syringe. Use a sterile syringe or split drugs in powdered form.*

