

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Diseases like hepatitis C can be confusing. To help set the record straight, here are some answers to common questions people have about hepatitis C.

Q: Can you get hepatitis C from sharing drugs?

A: Not everyone with the disease has used drugs. But, over half of the people with hepatitis C have shared needles to take drugs at some point in their life. And sharing needles *does* increase the chance of getting viral hepatitis. It's important to understand that *anyone* can get hepatitis C if they are exposed to infected blood.

Q: Can I get hepatitis C from sharing personal items like razors and toothbrushes?

A: Yes. Less commonly, a person can also get hepatitis C by sharing personal care items that may have come in contact with another person's blood, such as razors or toothbrushes.

Q: Is it possible to get hepatitis C from blood transfusions?

A: Before 1992, blood from donors was not tested for hepatitis C. Since then, when the blood supply started getting tested, almost no one has been infected with hepatitis C from blood transfusions. If you were a recipient of a blood transfusion prior to 1992, and have not been tested for hepatitis C, talk to your doctor about getting tested.

Q: Is hepatitis C a sexually transmitted disease?

A: It is possible to get hepatitis C by having sex, but this doesn't happen very often. When it does, it happens only when one person's blood mixes with the blood of another person. This most often happens during rough sex or anal sex, which is why it's always important to use a condom.

Q: Is hepatitis C as common as HIV?

A: According to the *Institute of Medicine*, it is estimated that in 2010, about 4 million people in the United States have been infected with hepatitis C. In comparison, just over 1 million people have HIV. This means that hepatitis C is about *4 times more common* than HIV in the United States.

Q: Can alcohol cause hepatitis C?

A: Hepatitis C is caused by the hepatitis C virus, not by drinking alcohol. But alcohol can be very damaging to the liver and make hepatitis C worse.

Q: If I'm diagnosed with hepatitis C, but I don't feel sick, do I still need to see my doctor?

A: Once you are told you have hepatitis C, you *should* visit your doctor regularly. Even though you might be feeling fine, it's possible that your liver is being badly damaged.

Q: If hepatitis C was making my health worse, wouldn't I see or feel some sign of the disease?

A: Most people with hepatitis show no signs of the disease for many years. But as the disease gets worse, signs do appear. Some of these signs are mild, and some are serious. Liver damage can happen with or without signs of hepatitis C. This is why it's very important to have regular checkups, even if you are feeling fine.

Q: Can hepatitis C be treated with antibiotics?

A: Hepatitis C is a virus. Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. Other drugs are needed to treat viruses like hepatitis C.

Q: Is getting hepatitis C a death sentence?

A: Many people with long-lasting hepatitis C will die from the damage it causes. But the good news is, if discovered and treated successfully, the virus can be *cleared* (removed from your body).

Q: Is there a vaccine that can keep you from getting hepatitis C?

A: There is no vaccine that can keep you from getting hepatitis C. There are vaccines for hepatitis A and hepatitis B, but not for hepatitis C.

