

HEPATITIS C BASICS

What is Hepatitis C?

- People can get Hepatitis C when blood carrying the virus gets into their bloodstream
- Once inside, it infects the liver and causes inflammation and scarring of the liver
- The liver is important because it helps the body fight infections, clean toxins (poisons) from the blood, digest food and more
- The more damage there is, the harder it is for the liver to do its job and people can become very sick



How is Hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C is spread blood to blood. It is transmitted through blood only but can be present in fluids containing blood.

HIGH RISK

- Sharing injection drug use equipment
 - Syringes
 - Cookers/Spoons
 - Water/Filters
- Sharing Crack/Meth Pipes
 - Chapped/burned lips can transmit the virus
- Tattoos from unregulated shops
 - Prison tattoos
 - Home tattoos
 - Improper sterilization



LOW RISK

- Exposure to infected blood through manicures, pedicures, sharing personal care items (razors, toothbrushes, etc.).
- Sex with an infected partner. This is an uncommon route of transmitting the Hepatitis C virus, especially among long-term monogamous couples.

Testing for Hepatitis C

There are two levels of testing that need to be done before someone can be confirmed to have Hepatitis C virus active in their body.

Antibody Test:

This is the first test and determines if someone has been exposed to the Hepatitis C virus. 20-25% of people spontaneously recover from Hepatitis C, so they may test positive for the antibody test, but have already cleared the virus from their system.

RNA (Ribonucleic Acid) Test:

This tests for the genetic material of the Hepatitis C virus in the blood and determines if someone currently has active Hepatitis C. This test needs to be positive for someone to be diagnosed with Hepatitis C.



Prevention

- **Don't use drug equipment that has been used by someone else, such as:**
 - Syringes
 - Filters
 - Cookers
 - Water
 - Pipes for smoking crack or crystal meth
 - Straws for snorting
- **Hepatitis lives for many days outside of the body, especially in:**
 - Cookers and filters (wash's)
 - Water
 - Syringes
- **Always go to a tattoo shop that is inspected by Public Health. Avoid getting tattoos in prison or at home.**

***USE NEW EQUIPMENT
EVERY TIME.***

Stages of Liver Damage

Hepatitis C infection:

The Hepatitis C virus enters the bloodstream and infects liver cells.

Inflammation:

Damaged liver cells cause the liver to swell.

Fibrosis:

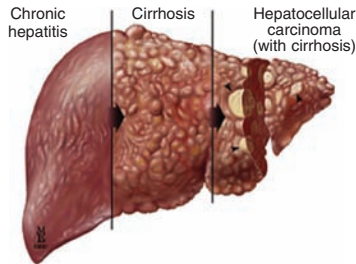
Damaged liver cells become scar tissue.

Cirrhosis:

Advanced scarring of the liver that results in impaired liver functioning.

Liver cancer or liver failure:

In some cases people living with Hepatitis C can develop liver cancer, or their liver can stop working (liver failure).



How do I live healthy with Hepatitis C?

Once diagnosed, there are some things that can keep someone with Hepatitis C healthy regardless of whether or not they choose treatment.

- Get the vaccine for Hepatitis A and B so you don't become co-infected
- Reduce alcohol and smoking which can be hard on your liver
- Practice safer sex
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet
- Drink 8 glasses of water a day
- Get light to moderate exercise 3-6 times per week
- Take breaks and rest when you feel tired
- Reduce stress
- Maintain friendships
- See your healthcare provider for regular check ups



For additional information or questions RHAC & LIHC:

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

#30-186 King Street
London, Ontario
N6A 1C7
Tel: 519-434-1601
www.hivaidsconnection.ca



London Intercommunity Health Centre

659 Dundas Street
London, Ontario
N5W 2Z1
Tel: 519-660-0874
www.lihc.on.ca



Websites:

www.catie.ca



JANUARY 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED
	1 New Year's Day	2	3
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NOTES

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Reduce alcohol and smoking*

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DECEMBER 2017

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JANUARY 2018

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FEBRUARY 2018

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FEBRUARY 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Get adequate sleep*

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Practice safer sex*

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JANUARY 2018
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FEBRUARY 2018
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MARCH 2018
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MARCH 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Eat a healthy and balanced diet*

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JANUARY 2018

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FEBRUARY 2018

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MARCH 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Drink 8 glasses of water a day*

FEBRUARY 2018

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APRIL 2018

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JUNE 2018

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MARCH 2018

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JUNE 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Take breaks and rest when you feel tired*

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MAY 2018

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JULY 2018

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MAY 2018

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JUNE 2018

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JULY 2018

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Reduce stress*

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JUNE 2018

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JULY 2018

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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OCTOBER 2018

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Maintain friendships*

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NOVEMBER 2018

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OCTOBER 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Get regular check-ups*

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OCTOBER 2018

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DECEMBER 2018

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NOVEMBER 2018

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Get the vaccine for Hepatitis A & B*

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JANUARY 2019

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*Healthy living with Hepatitis C –
Get light to moderate exercise*

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