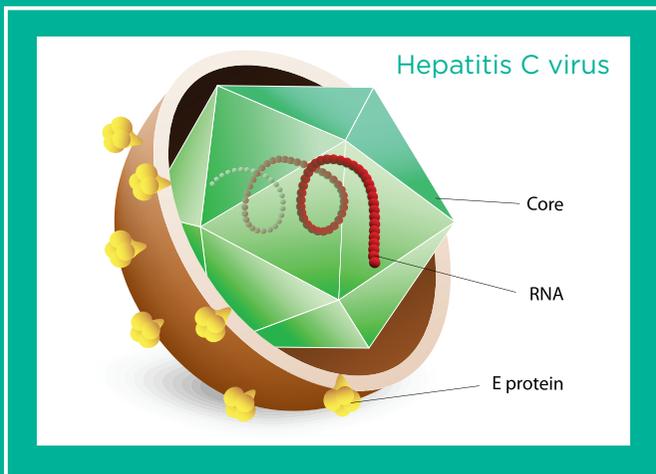


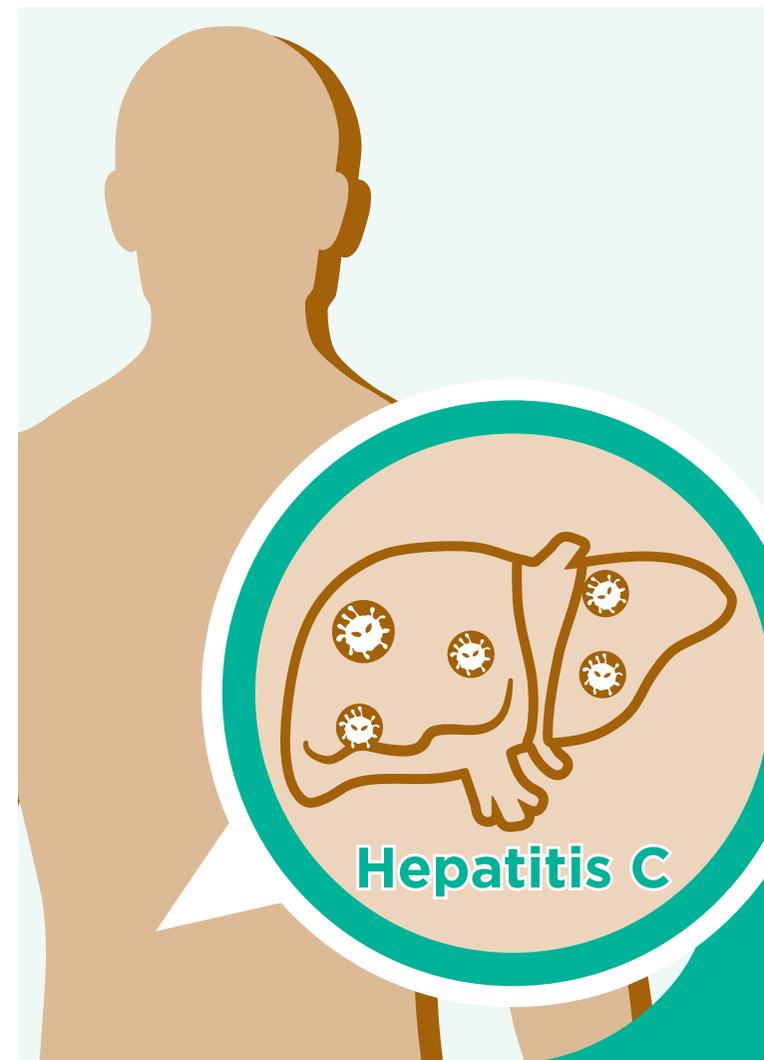
# WHAT IS IT?

Hepatitis C is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. It can lead to chronic hepatitis as well as increase your risks of liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. A person who has Hepatitis C can still get other types of viral infections, such as Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. There is currently no vaccination for Hepatitis C but it is potentially curable.



## HOW CAN I BE INFECTED WITH HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a contagious disease and is commonly spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. This can be through open wounds and sores, blood transfusions, sharing cutting equipment and syringes with an infected person. It may occasionally be passed through unprotected sex where there is an exchange of bodily fluids such as semen and vaginal fluid.



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## Are you at RISK?

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of Hepatitis C can occur 15 to 150 days after contact with the virus. This is known as the incubation period. The symptoms of acute infection may be mild and non-specific in most people. Approximately 85% of those infected with the Hepatitis C virus will develop into chronic hepatitis.

Patients are usually diagnosed incidentally during their routine medical check-ups, when their liver enzymes are abnormal or they present with complications. Therefore, at-risk individuals should be screened for Hepatitis C.

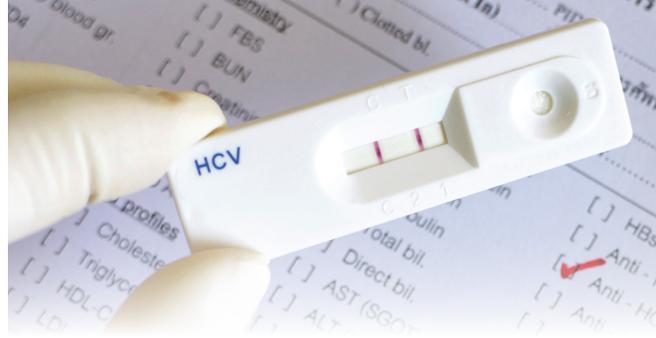
Common symptoms of Hepatitis C include:

- Jaundice
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Itchy skin
- Swollen ankles

In severe cases, the symptoms are usually those resulting from liver failure, requiring hospitalization.

## INDIVIDUAL AT RISK

- Those who share cutting instrument with an infected person, such as razor, toothbrush, nail clipper.
- Those who are accidentally exposed to the infected blood amongst healthcare or waste disposal workers
- I/V drug abusers who share needles
- Those who use contaminated instruments, in acupuncture, body-piercing, tattooing parlours.
- Those who are infected with Hepatitis C and pregnant (the baby can be infected during childbirth)
- Those who have unprotected sex with an infected person(s)
- Recipients of clotting factors made before 1987
- Recipients of blood transfusions or organ transplants before 1992
- Those who have been on long-term kidney dialysis



## HOW IS HEPATITIS C DIAGNOSED?

A blood test can diagnose Hepatitis C infection. However, the blood test for Hepatitis C is not part of the routine; unless you specifically ask for it, the infection can remain in your liver undiagnosed for a long time until severe symptoms show up.

Some only discover that they are infected when they donate blood, as all blood donations are screened thoroughly for Hepatitis C. Others learn that they have Hepatitis C when they have to undergo a series of blood tests for other medical problems. An abnormal level of liver enzymes is the foremost indicator that one's liver maybe infected or damage.

You should be treated by the doctor as chronic Hepatitis C can lead to liver cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver failure, liver cancer and death.

## HOW IS HEPATITIS C TREATED?

Chronic cases of Hepatitis C - The medications for hepatitis C treatment are evolving rapidly with excellent results for patients. The types of treatment are based on the hepatitis C genotype. Most involve oral medications taken for a period of 12 to 24 weeks. The side effects are minimal compared to the previous treatment involving interferon injection. The success rates for the new treatment regimens are very good. Please consult your doctor for a more detailed discussion about available treatment options.

During regular check-ups, ask your doctor to run a series of blood tests to check on the level of the Hepatitis C virus in your bloodstream, and/or if anti-viral medication is needed, and to recommend the appropriate treatment.

## DOs



Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B



Cover up all open sores and wounds



Practice safe sex using condoms and inform your partner so that he/she can be tested and/or be immunized



Monitor your liver health and visit your doctor at least once a year to check on the progression of the disease



Inform your doctors and dentists that you are a carrier of the Hepatitis C virus during routine visits/check-ups



Be informed about research developments regarding Hepatitis C treatments to help you make the best decisions



Consult a liver specialist

## DON'Ts



Drink alcohol, as this may further damage your liver



Take certain prescribed, over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements without your doctor's knowledge



Share your toothbrush, razors, nail clippers, syringes, etc. with others



Donate blood, plasma, organs, sperms or tissues