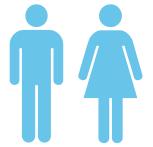


# Quick Facts



An estimated  
**2.7-3.9 MILLION**  
people in the U.S. have  
chronic hepatitis C



**1945-1965**



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# The Liver Institute

METHODIST DALLAS MEDICAL CENTER



## HEPATITIS C

**[TheLiverInstituteTX.com](http://TheLiverInstituteTX.com)**

 **Methodist**  
TRANSPLANT SPECIALISTS

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a viral infection (any illness you get from a virus) that attacks the liver and causes it to swell, this is known as inflammation. Organs such as your liver can become damaged due to inflammation and as a result, can no longer function properly.

Hepatitis C, also known as hep C or HCV, is the leading cause of liver failure and end-stage liver disease as well as being a major cause of liver transplants in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: American Liver Foundation

### TYPES OF HEPATITIS C

There are two types of hepatitis C infections:

- **ACUTE:** When someone is first infected, it is called an acute infection. If you have symptoms, they can last up to 6 months. Some people are able to fight off the infection and the virus goes away.
- **CHRONIC:** If a person is unable to get rid of the virus and continues to test positive after 6 months, they are diagnosed with a chronic infection. More than 75% of people with acute hepatitis C will develop chronic hepatitis C.

## How can you get Hep C?

Hepatitis C is an infection that is spread through direct blood-to-blood contact. The most common ways to contract hepatitis C are:

- Sexual contact
- Sharing toothbrushes, nail, clippers, razors
- Sharing drug paraphernalia
- Blood transfusions (prior to 1992)
- Body piercings & tattoos using non-sterile ink and needles

It is important to remember that hepatitis C is NOT spread casually through coughing, sneezing, exposure to bodily fluids (sweat, urine and tears), hugging, cooking or sharing food.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will order blood work that will test for the virus. The results will:

- Confirm the type of hepatitis
- Establish the severity of the infection
- Determine if the infection is active or dormant
- Learn if you are currently contagious
- Be used to assess your overall health before treatment can begin

If you test positive for hepatitis C, your doctor may order further imaging tests, such as a liver ultrasound, to determine the status of your liver inflammation.



## Complications of Hepatitis C

Early diagnosis and treatment of a chronic hepatitis C infection can prevent liver damage. Without proper treatment, people with chronic hepatitis C can develop:

- CIRRHOSIS
- LIVER FAILURE
- LIVER CANCER

## Common symptoms

Most people with chronic hepatitis C do not experience symptoms for many years, often decades. Symptoms only appear after the virus has damaged the liver enough to cause symptoms. Some people with an acute infection may experience symptoms a couple months after becoming infected.

The most common symptoms include:

- Fever, fatigue, muscle or joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Mild nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Gray- or clay-colored stools
- Dark yellow urine
- Yellow eyes and skin (called "jaundice")



## FAQs

### I just got diagnosed with hep C, should my family get tested?

It's important to inform your family members, spouses and sexual partners about your hepatitis C diagnosis. The Center for Disease Control strongly recommends that all adults ages 18 to 79 years be screened for hepatitis C.

### Can hep C be spread through sexual contact?

Although not common, hep C can be transmitted through sexual activity.

### Is there a vaccine to prevent hep C?

No, but we typically recommend getting vaccinated against the hepatitis A and B viruses. These are viruses that also can cause liver damage and make hepatitis C worse.

### Can I drink alcohol?

People with hepatitis C should generally avoid alcohol to slow the disease's progression. Alcohol can damage the liver, which is already damaged by hepatitis C, and increase the risk of serious liver disease.

### How much does treatment cost?

Our medication therapy management team will work with you and your insurance provider to assess the funding available for treatment costs.