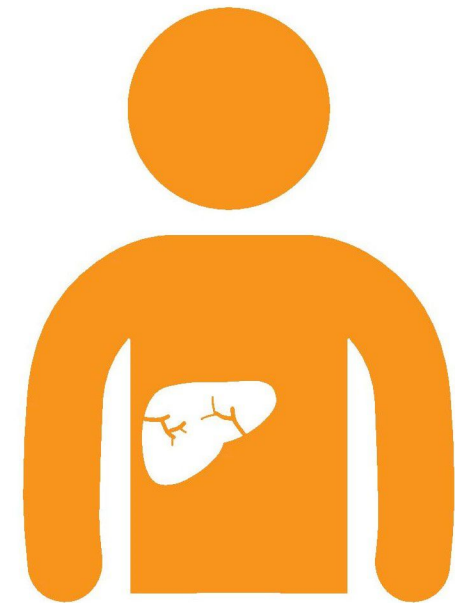




HEPATITIS C INFORMATION FOR IMMIGRANTS AND NEWCOMERS



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HEPATITIS C IS A VIRUS THAT INJURES THE LIVER.

Hepatitis C is a virus that harms the liver. The liver is an organ that does many important jobs, such as helping to digest food, breaking down toxins (poisons) and drugs, fighting infections, and more. The liver is an essential organ and you cannot live without it.

YOU CAN HAVE HEPATITIS C AND NOT KNOW IT.

Many people can live with hepatitis C for 20 to 30 years or more without feeling sick or experiencing any symptoms, even though the virus is still injuring the liver. Over time, liver injury gets worse, making it hard for this vital organ to function.

TREATMENT CAN CURE HEPATITIS C.

Most people need treatment to cure hepatitis C. Hepatitis C treatments are simple to take and cure more than 95% of people with the virus. They come in pill form, have few side effects and are usually taken for eight or 12 weeks. Most people don't pay out of pocket for their hepatitis C treatment. The cost is usually covered through public or private health insurance and drug company programs.

CURE DOES NOT PROTECT AGAINST RE-INFECTION.

People do not develop immunity to hepatitis C after being cured of the virus, so it is possible to get re-infected. Taking steps to avoid getting exposed to the hepatitis C virus again will help you continue to live well once you have been cured of the virus.

TESTING IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE HEPATITIS C.

Nearly half of all people with hepatitis C in Canada are unaware of their infection. Talk to your service provider about getting tested for hepatitis C.

It usually takes **two** blood tests to tell whether you have hepatitis C.

The **hepatitis C antibody test** checks whether you have ever come in contact with the virus.

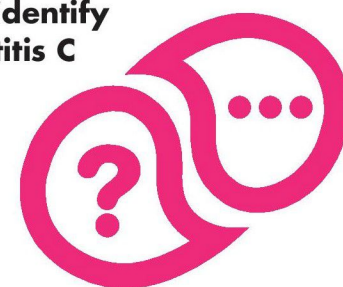
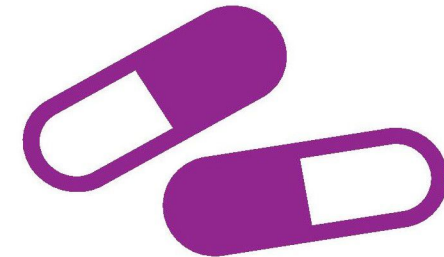
The **confirmatory test** checks whether the virus is currently in your body. If this test is positive, you have hepatitis C.

Testing is getting simpler all the time.

HEPATITIS C IS PASSED BLOOD TO BLOOD.

Know how to protect yourself and others.

Know how to identify different hepatitis C transmission risk factors.



Hepatitis C does not spread through casual contact or by hugging, kissing or touching a person living with the virus. Nor does it spread if new or properly sterilized equipment is used during medical and dental procedures or drug use.

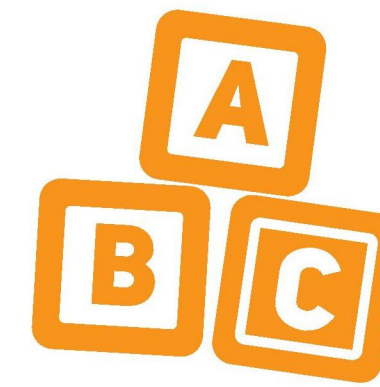
Hepatitis C can be passed when the blood of a person with the virus gets into another person's blood. It can be passed even when the amount of blood is too small to see. Hepatitis C is a strong virus—it can live outside of the body for many weeks. This means that it can be spread through dried blood.

Hepatitis C can be transmitted by:

- Re-using medical, dental or surgical equipment that was not sterilized properly. This is very rare in Canada.
- Getting a blood transfusion or organ transplant that was not screened for hepatitis C. If you have received blood, blood products or an organ transplant in Canada before 1992, or in another country at any time and are not sure about the screening practices there, speak to your healthcare provider about getting tested for hepatitis C.
- Sharing equipment used for preparing and injecting drugs including needles, syringes, filters, water and cookers.
- Re-using tools for electrolysis, acupuncture, piercing and tattooing that have not been properly sterilized (including needles, ink and ink pots).

Other ways hepatitis C can get inside the body:

- Sharing or borrowing personal care items that might have blood on them, such as razors, nail clippers and toothbrushes. This includes shaving at community barber shops when razors are re-used.
- Some practices used by traditional healers that involve cutting or piercing the skin, such as wet cupping or acupuncture.
- Sexual transmission of hepatitis C is rare. The risk increases when certain factors are present, such as HIV and STIs. Certain types of sex can also increase risk, such as condomless anal sex, sex where blood is present and chemsex (using specific drugs to enhance and prolong sex).
- Hepatitis C can be passed to a child during pregnancy or childbirth. The risk is generally low in Canada, but it may be higher in countries where healthcare practices are different. Hepatitis C does not spread through breastfeeding. However, if nipples are cracked or bleeding, breastfeeding should be stopped until they are healed.



HEPATITIS C IS DIFFERENT FROM HEPATITIS A AND B.

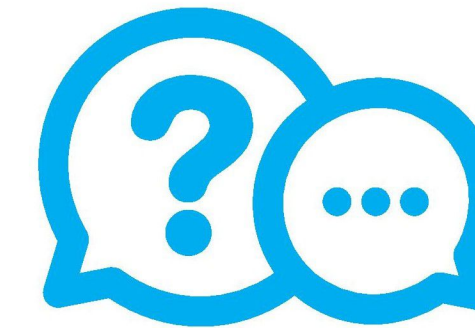
Hepatitis A is transmitted when people unknowingly ingest fecal matter, usually through contaminated water or food. Nearly all people clear hepatitis A without taking medication, and the body becomes immune to the virus.

Hepatitis B can be spread when the blood, semen or vaginal fluid of a person who has the virus enters the body of another person who does not have the virus. The virus can also be passed to a baby during childbirth. Most people who get hepatitis B as adults clear the virus on their own and their body becomes immune to the virus. The chance of developing chronic hepatitis B becomes greater if a person is exposed to the virus at a young age. Those who do develop a chronic infection can go on to have long-term liver problems. Treatment can help slow down and manage the virus, but there is no cure for a chronic infection.

There are vaccines that protect against hepatitis A and B. Speak to your healthcare provider about getting vaccinated.

There is no vaccine for hepatitis C, but there is a cure.

SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT HEPATITIS C: SEXUAL HEALTH INFOLINE ONTARIO.



In Ontario, this province-wide information line about hepatitis, HIV and sexual health offers services in Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Tagalog, Mandarin, Cantonese and many other languages. When you call, you may be given a specific time to talk to a counsellor in your preferred language. They can also refer you to a clinic in Ontario to get tested.

Call toll-free in Ontario:

1-800-668-2437



Monday to Friday:
10 am – 10:30 pm
Saturday and Sunday:
11 am – 3 pm

**Outside of Ontario,
contact your healthcare
provider.**



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CATIE Ordering Centre No: ATI-70188
(Aussi disponible en français : ATI-70189)

Information in this brochure is not medical advice. Decisions about treatment should always be made with the advice of a doctor who knows about Hepatitis C. Treatment changes, so talk to a doctor to get the latest information.

Production of this publication has been funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Health. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of our funders.