



BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

WELLNESS  CAN'T WAIT

Seven Facts About Hepatitis C



Wellness Can't Wait

- ☒ Weed the garden
- ☒ Take car in for tune up
- ☐ Learn about Hepatitis C

Some things should be checked first.

You've probably heard about Hepatitis C in the news. It's the most common bloodborne infection in the United States. Because it can be easily spread, it has sparked fear and worry in some people. Your **Wellness Can't Wait**. We're here to help people understand more about this virus by taking a look at some facts about the disease.



TWENTY OUT OF EVERY 100 PEOPLE NEVER EXPERIENCE SYMPTOMS. THEY CAN STILL SPREAD THE DISEASE AND GIVE IT TO SOMEONE ELSE.

What Is Hepatitis C?

It is a disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus. The virus causes damage to the liver, and people can contract either an acute or chronic form of Hepatitis C. Statistics show that 15 to 25 of every 100 people who test positive for acute Hepatitis C are able to get rid of it without any problem.

In contrast, 75 to 85 of every 100 people who get Hepatitis C have the chronic, lifelong form of the virus. Of those same 100, 60 to 70 will suffer long-term liver disease. Others will develop cirrhosis of the liver.

Nearly 500,000 people die from Hepatitis C every year.

How Do You Contract Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is spread through blood-to-blood contact between humans. It is mostly spread through sharing drug needles. It can also be passed through sexual contact even though the risk appears to be low. You won't contract Hepatitis C while getting tattoos or body piercings with clean equipment. If the equipment is not sterile, though, you can contract the virus.

The disease is rarely spread from mother to child during pregnancy. It is not passed through breast milk, water, food or casual contact like shaking hands, hugging or kissing. It is also not spread through bug bites.

How Does Hepatitis C Affect the Body?

If a person has been infected for many years, he or she may have liver damage and the symptoms that go along with it. Chronic Hepatitis C can cause liver failure, cirrhosis, cancer and even death.

What Are the Symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Symptoms usually show up six to seven weeks after exposure to the disease. Twenty out of every 100 people never experience symptoms. They can still spread the disease and give it to someone else.

Symptoms of acute Hepatitis C include fever, loss of hunger, nausea and vomiting, stomach and joint pain, jaundice, clay-colored bowel movements and dark urine.



Who Needs to Be Tested for Hepatitis C?

You should be tested for Hepatitis C if you:

- Were born between 1945 and 1965
- Currently are or have ever been an injection drug user
- Were treated for blood clots before 1987
- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- Undergo long-term hemodialysis treatment
- Test positive for abnormal liver function or liver disease
- Work in health care
- Have been exposed to a needlestick
- Suffer from HIV

How Is Hepatitis C Treated?

There are a number of medications available to treat Hepatitis C. If you've been diagnosed with the disease, talk with your doctor about treatment options. Check with your health insurer to find out all you can about doctors and care facilities in your plan's network. You can also learn about the most affordable drugs in your health insurance plan to treat your Hepatitis C.

How Can Hepatitis C Be Prevented?

Be careful when handling sharp needles and razors. Use condoms during sexual activity. If you give or receive blood, that blood should be tested for Hepatitis C. At risk individuals should be monitored for liver disease.