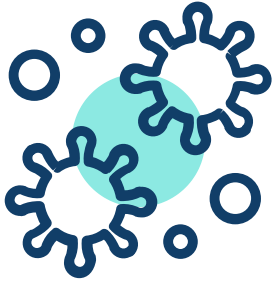


# Hepatitis C: Risk Factors, Symptoms, & Treatments



Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus. This virus typically starts off as a mild sickness that can improve on its own, but for many people, it doesn't go away and can lead to serious health issues like liver cancer or liver failure. That's why it's important to know the risk factors associated with it, its symptoms, and what treatments are available.

## How Does Hepatitis C Spread? Who's at Risk?

Hepatitis C is a virus that travels through the bloodstream and can spread when someone comes in contact with blood that contains the virus. Here are some factors that make it more likely for you to get infected:

- If you use injection drugs and share needles
- If you have an HIV infection
- If you've received transfusions or organ transplants
- If you've come in contact with unsterile tattoo equipment
- If you work in healthcare and Standard Precautions aren't always followed



If an expecting mom has hepatitis C, she could pass it down to her baby. About 5.8% of pregnancies of babies born to moms with hepatitis C get the virus too. The risk increases for the baby if the mom also has HIV.

## Hepatitis C Symptoms

The symptoms of hepatitis C vary depending on the severity and the individual. Sometimes, you might not even notice anything until the illness worsens. Here are the main symptoms most people with hepatitis C might experience:

- Fatigue
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Abdominal pain (especially around the liver area)
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Dark colored urine
- Nausea and vomiting
- Easily bruising or bleeding



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## Treatments for Hepatitis C

Keep in mind there is no vaccine for hepatitis C, but there are treatment options available for this virus.



**Antiviral medications:** Direct-acting antiviral (DAA) drugs are the most effective for treating and curing hepatitis C in patients. DAAs target different stages of the hepatitis C virus's life cycle directly, preventing it from replicating. These drugs are proven to be safe and have cured about 95% of individuals with long-term hepatitis C.

**Liver transplant:** If hepatitis C caused a lot of damage to your liver, a transplant might be an option. While a new liver can still get infected from hepatitis C, doctors recommend taking DAAs after the transplant to prevent the new liver from being damaged.

**Lifestyle changes:** Making changes to your lifestyle isn't enough to completely treat and cure hepatitis C, but it can help improve your overall health and manage the virus. Things like avoiding alcohol, staying at a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and exercising often can make a difference.

Remember, hepatitis C might not show obvious symptoms at first, but it can get worse over time. If you think you've been exposed to the virus, don't wait around. Talk to a doctor and get tested ASAP. Finding it early can make treating it a lot easier.