

## **Health Care Education Hepatitis C**



### **Hidayah Foundation**

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*And when I am sick, then He heals me. - - - Al Quran – Ash-Shuraa, Verse 26:80*

## **Hepatitis C**

**What is Hepatitis C?** Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which damages the liver and causes inflammation. Left untreated, it can lead to scarring of the liver and eventually liver cancer.

**Why is Liver so important?** The liver is the largest, heaviest and one of the most important internal organs. Dark red in color, it weighs 1-1.5 kg and is located behind the lower right part of your ribs. It stores vitamins, sugars, fats and other nutrients from the food you eat and then releases them to the body when needed. It also builds basic chemicals that your body needs to stay healthy. Last but not the least; it removes waste products, harmful bacteria and toxic chemicals from your blood. In other words - it is the powerhouse, recycling, and disposal plant of the body. Life is not possible without the liver.

**What are the symptoms?** Known as “silent” disease, 80% of people infected with HCV have no symptoms. The most common symptoms include fatigue, jaundice (yellowing of skin and whites of the eyes), dark urine, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, and nausea. HCV affects every one differently; some people develop serious problems within 5 years, while others still feel fine after 20 years. Long-term effects include liver failure (in 20% of cases) and cancer (a smaller percentage of people may develop cancer after 10 to 20 years). Deaths from chronic liver disease are in the range of 1%-5%.

**Can Hepatitis C be prevented?** There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C.

**How is HCV spread?** You cannot get HCV by shaking hands, hugging, kissing or sitting next to a person, sharing kitchen utensils, combs, furniture, or by someone coughing or sneezing. No one should be excluded from work, school, play, and child-care or other settings on the basis of their HCV infection status. The disease is spread primarily through direct exposure to infected blood. Since most people with HCV are not aware that they are infected, un-knowingly they place others at risk. Examples of how you can get infected include:

- The use of I.V. needles and syringes used for medical reasons and street drugs etc as well as Acupuncture.
- Blood transfusion from a donor whose blood contained HCV.
- Long-term kidney dialysis as you may have unknowingly shared supplies/equipment that had someone else's blood on them.
- Your mother had Hepatitis C at the time she gave birth to you. About 4% infants born to HCV infected women become infected.
- Sexual contact with an HCV infected person.
- Sharing of razors, blades and toothbrushes.
- Tools that are used to engrave tattoos.

**How to kill Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)?** Using gloves, any blood spills - including dried blood - should be cleaned by mixture of one part household bleach and 10 parts of water. HCV may survive at room temperature for between 16 hours and 4 days.

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**Who should get tested for Hepatitis C?** If you can answer “YES” to any of these questions, please see your doctor immediately because you might be at risk for HCV.

**Please answer these questions honestly**

Have you had a blood transfusion?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Currently, or in the past – have you:		
- Experienced chronic fatigue or tiredness?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had a surgery, including Oral surgery?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had a C-section for childbirth (for women)?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Been diagnosed as HIV-positive?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had kidney dialysis?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had an elevated Liver Enzyme Test (ALT)?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Been Diagnosed with hepatitis B?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had a tattoo?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had a body piercing (nose, ears, etc.)?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Had multiple sex partners or had sex with some one who fits the above description?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Does your work put you in contact with blood, blood products or needles?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Does any of your immediate family members have or has been diagnosed with HCV or Hepatitis B?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**How do you know if you have Hepatitis C?**

There are several blood tests that your doctor may order:

- a) *Anti-HCV (antibody to HCV)*
- b) *Qualitative tests to detect presence or absence of virus (HCV RNA)*
- c) *Quantitative tests to detect amount (titer) of virus (HCV RNA)*

**Please note:** Children under the age of 18 months should not be tested for anti-HCV

because anti-HCV from the mother might last until this age. If needed, testing for HCV RNA could be performed at or after an infant's first visit at age 1-2 months. HCV RNA testing should then be repeated at a subsequent visit independent of the initial HCV RNA test result.

**What should I do, if I test POSITIVE for HCV?** Fortunately, treatments are available. If you have HCV, you must seek treatment or you may increase the risk of developing life-threatening diseases such as liver failure and cancer. Also:

- Do not donate blood, body organs, other tissue, or semen.
- Do not share personal items that might have your blood on them, such as toothbrushes, dental appliances, nail-grooming equipment or razors.
- Cover your cuts and skin sores to keep from spreading HCV.
- Married partner should use latex condoms. Though the efficacy of latex condoms in HCV prevention is unknown, but their proper use may reduce transmission.
- Don't start any new medicines or use over-the-counter, herbal, and other medicines without a physician's knowledge.
- Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A if liver damage is present.

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Sources: Department of Health and Human Services, January 2006 and information available freely on the Internet.

**Disclaimer:** All information provided in this flyer is posted for educational purposes only; it is not meant to be used as medical advice. For any advice, diagnosis, and treatment consult your personal physician.