

What is hepatitis C and how is it spread?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) and is spread when blood from an HCV-infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected.

Because of how it spreads, certain life circumstances, jobs and behaviors can increase your risk for hepatitis C.



Did You Know?

Many people with hepatitis C do not have any symptoms for years.

Any equipment used to prepare drugs can spread hepatitis C when shared.

- Hepatitis C virus can live outside of the body for up to six weeks.
- Sharing supplies used to prepare, inject, inhale, or smoke drugs can spread hepatitis C. This includes surfaces, straws, pipes, spoons, ties, cookers, filters or other supplies.
- Sharing or reusing syringes increases the chance of spreading the hepatitis C virus.

Resources & References



CDC | Hepatitis C Basics

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-c/about/>



CDC | Clinical Signs and Symptoms of Hepatitis C

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-c/hcp/clinical-signs/>



Find Kentucky Harm Reduction Programs

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/hab/Pages/kyseps.aspx>



Kentucky Viral Hepatitis Program:

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/idb/Pages/vhp.aspx>

Hepatitis C



*Common
Preventable
Curable*



Kentucky Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



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Testing for Hepatitis C

It is important to get tested for hepatitis C, especially if you think you've been exposed.

Many people do not have symptoms of hepatitis C infection, so testing is the only way to know if you have been infected.

Who should be tested?

- All adults 18 and older **at least once** in their lifetime.
- Pregnant people during **each pregnancy**.
- People who have been incarcerated.
- People who use drugs.
- People who participate in certain high risk behaviors that increase their risk of disease or injury.



To find hepatitis C **testing** near you scan the QR code below or visit:

<https://gettested.cdc.gov/>



Did You Know?

Many syringe services and harm reduction programs do hepatitis C and HIV testing.

Hepatitis C Treatment

There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. However, there are safe and effective treatments. These treatments can cure hepatitis C and have been available since 2014.

If you are diagnosed with hepatitis C, talk to your doctor right away about getting treatment that is right for you.

Treatments for hepatitis C:

- Are easy to take
- Have few side effects
- Can cure more than 95% of people in just 8–12 weeks
- Are often covered by insurance
- Do not require sobriety

5 Steps to Hepatitis C Treatment

1. Get tested for hepatitis C antibodies, usually a fingerstick blood test or a blood draw.
2. If positive, get further blood testing to see if the hepatitis C virus is active in your body and to check your liver and blood health.
3. A healthcare provider that treats hepatitis C may prescribe treatment.
4. Take medication for 8-12 weeks as prescribed until it is completed.
5. Get tested for hepatitis C 12 weeks after finishing treatment to be sure the treatment worked.

Untreated Hepatitis C

If left untreated, hepatitis C can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, liver cancer and even death.

The longer someone with hepatitis C goes without treatment, the more damage is done to their liver.



To find hepatitis C **treatment** near you scan the QR code below or visit:

<https://cdc.gov/hepatitis-c/treatment>

Harm Reduction

The best way to prevent hepatitis C infection or reinfection after treatment is to avoid coming into contact with someone else's blood.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Sharing supplies used to prepare, inject, inhale, or smoke drugs can spread hepatitis C. This includes surfaces, straws, pipes, spoons, ties, cookers, filters or other supplies.
- Utilize syringe services programs.
- Use condoms or other barrier methods and lube during sex.
- Use sterilized equipment for tattoos and piercings.



To find a KY Syringe Services Program near you scan the QR code below or visit: