

Hepatitis C

What you should know

What is it?

Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver. Untreated, it can be life-threatening.



Can it be cured?

Yes! New treatments can cure hepatitis C for almost everyone.



What are the symptoms?



No symptoms.



Stomach pain.



Vomiting.



Yellow skin or eyes.

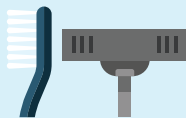
How does it spread?



Used or shared needles, syringes, or lancets.



Sex.



Shared care items like toothbrushes or razors.



Born to a person with hepatitis C.

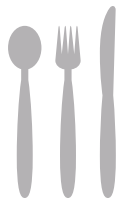


Medical mishaps like needle injuries or unsterile instruments.

It doesn't spread through:



Breastfeeding.



Sharing utensils.



Kissing, hugging, or holding hands.



Coughing or sneezing.



Insect bites.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends:

Screening:

- All adults 18 years or older, at least once in their life.
- Pregnant people, during each pregnancy.

Testing at least once people who:

- Ever used injection drugs.
- Have HIV.
- Have abnormal liver tests or liver disease or are on hemodialysis.
- Received donated blood or organ before July 1992.
- Received clotting factor concentrate before 1987.
- Work in healthcare or public safety, after needle injuries or mucosal exposure to hepatitis C-positive blood.
- Were born to a person with hepatitis C.

Periodically testing:

- People with ongoing risk factors, including currently using injection drugs and sharing needles, syringes, or other drug equipment.
- People with certain medical conditions, including those who ever received maintenance hemodialysis.
- Any person who asks for hepatitis C testing.

Learn more at tpchd.org/hepc

Rev. Aug. 27, 2025



Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Hepatitis C

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver. Untreated, it can cause serious health problems, like cirrhosis (liver scarring) or liver cancer.

How does it spread?

Hepatitis C spreads when blood containing the virus gets inside another person. This can happen when someone:

- Uses a needle, syringe or lancet contaminated with blood containing hepatitis C.
- Uses a personal care item (like a razor or toothbrush) contaminated with blood containing hepatitis C.
- Has sex with a person who has hepatitis C.
- Is born to a woman who has hepatitis C.

Any practice involving unsterilized needles can transmit hepatitis C or other diseases. Done improperly, even vitamin infusions, acupuncture or tattoos can put you at risk. Practitioners need to take extra care to follow sterilization and infection control procedures to keep you safe.

What are the symptoms?

An infected person's symptoms may include stomach pain, vomiting or yellow eyes or skin. Most people will not know they have become infected, unless they get tested.

Should I get tested?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, you should get tested for hepatitis C.

- Did you receive a notification letter about possible hepatitis C exposure and the need to get tested?
- Have you used injection drugs and shared drug supplies with a person who has hepatitis C?
- Did you receive donated blood or organs before 1992?
- Does your mom have hepatitis C?
- Have you had sex with a person who has hepatitis C?
- Have you shared care items like razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, tweezers or floss with a person who has hepatitis C?
- Did you get a tattoo from an unregulated source, like in prison or from a friend?
- Do you have concerns about a healthcare procedure you received, like an injection or blood draw?

Historically, people born between 1945 and 1965 have a higher risk of having hepatitis C. If you were born in this time period, talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested.

How do I get tested?

If you received a letter about the need to get tested for hepatitis C, follow the directions in the letter.

Otherwise, ask your healthcare provider if you should get tested for hepatitis C.

What do I do if I have hepatitis C?

The important thing is to get treatment. If left untreated, hepatitis C can cause serious health problems. New treatments are available that can cure hepatitis C for almost everyone.