

Hepatitis C

What is Hepatitis?

“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications, and certain medical conditions can cause hepatitis. However, hepatitis is most often caused by a virus. In the United States, the most common types of viral hepatitis are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver that results from the Hepatitis C virus. Acute Hepatitis C refers to the first several months after someone is infected. Acute infection can range in severity from a very mild illness with few or no symptoms to a serious condition requiring hospitalization. For reasons that are not known, about 20% of people are able to clear, or get rid of, the virus without treatment in the first 6 months. Unfortunately, most people who get infected are not able to clear the Hepatitis C virus and develop a chronic, or lifelong, infection. Over time, chronic Hepatitis C can cause serious health problems including liver disease, liver failure, and even liver cancer.

What are the Symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Many people with Hepatitis C do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected. If symptoms occur, they can include: fever, feeling tired, not wanting to eat, upset stomach, throwing up, dark urine, grey-colored stool, joint pain, and yellow skin and eyes. The only way to know for sure you have Hepatitis C is a doctor’s diagnosis.

Who should get tested for Hepatitis C?

Testing for Hepatitis C is recommended for certain groups, including people who:
Were born from 1945 – 1965; received donated blood or organs before 1992;
Have ever injected drugs, even if it was just once or many years ago; Have certain medical conditions, such as chronic liver disease and HIV or AIDS; Have abnormal liver tests or liver disease; Have been exposed to blood from a person who has Hepatitis C; Are on hemodialysis; are born to a mother with Hepatitis C

Ways to prevent Hepatitis C?

Although. Although there is currently no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C, there are ways to reduce the risk of becoming infected with the Hepatitis C virus. Avoid sharing needles; Do not get tattoos from an unlicensed facility; Do not use people’s personal items such as, nail clippers, razors, toothbrush etc.

Can Hepatitis C be treated?

Yes. However treatment depends on many different factors, so it is important to see a doctor experienced in Hepatitis C. New and improved treatments are available that can cure Hepatitis C for many people.