

Hepatitis C

Who should be screened for the possibility of hepatitis C infection:

People who have high risk behavior:

- Drug abusers.
- Those with tattoos and piercings.
- People who received infected blood products.
- Children born to hepatitis C infected mothers.
- Prisoners.
- HIV infected patients.
- Sexual partners of hepatitis C infected patients.

Hepatitis C treatment

There is a treatment for hepatitis C which is very effective (can cure 95% of the patients). That is why early detection of hepatitis C infection is important to provide the right treatment at the right time.

Prevention of hepatitis C infection

There is no effective vaccine against hepatitis C virus. So, prevention is very important to decrease the chance of infection. This can be through:

- Safe and clean use of injecting equipment
- Testing of donated blood and blood products
- Avoiding high risk sexual behavior which leads to exposure to blood
- Education of healthcare workers regarding the safe use of injections and handling sharp objects
- Public education and raising awareness about hepatitis C infection
- Early treatment of patients infected with hepatitis C virus
- Providing vaccination against hepatitis B and A for patients who have hepatitis C infection to prevent co-infection



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Hepatitis C

It is a viral liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus infection leading to acute or chronic hepatitis. The disease can be a mild illness lasting for a few weeks or lifelong serious illness.

Transmission of hepatitis C

The main cause of the infection is the exposure to infected blood through:

- Unsafe needle injection practice (e.g. sharing injection equipment).
- Transfusion of infected blood.
- Unsafe sexual practices leading to exposure to blood.
- Less commonly, can be transmitted from the pregnant woman to her baby.

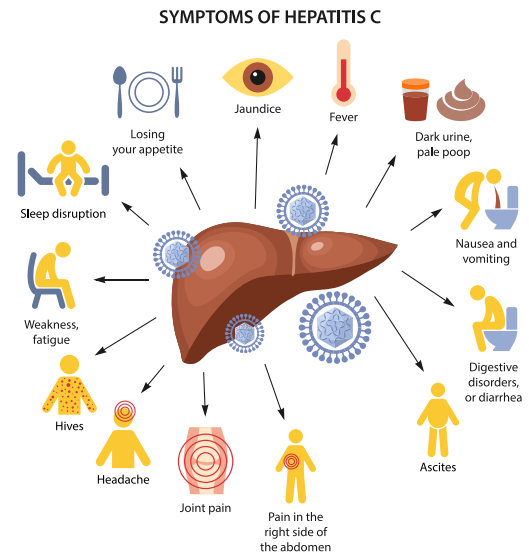
Note: hepatitis C does not transmit to others through:

- Breast milk.
- Food and water.
- Sharing food or drinks with hepatitis C infected patients.

Symptoms of hepatitis C infection

The majority of patients do not have symptoms of infection. However, those who develop symptoms may have non-specific symptoms like:

- Fever.
- Fatigue.
- Loss of appetite.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Dark urine.
- Grey colored feces.
- Joint pain.
- Yellowish discoloration of skin and eyes.



Complications of hepatitis C infection

- It can lead to chronic liver disease and liver cirrhosis.
- It can lead to liver cancer.
- Diagnose hepatitis C infection.
- We can test hepatitis C infection through:
 - Identifying antibodies against hepatitis C virus in the patient's blood using serological tests.
 - If the serological test is positive then we confirm the presence of active infection by identifying the hepatitis C virus ribonucleic acid using a nucleic acid test.
- When active hepatitis C infection confirmed, we assess the degree of liver damage using abdominal imaging and liver biopsy if needed.