

HEPATITIS C...KNOW THE FACTS

■ **What is Hepatitis C?**

Hepatitis C is a disease caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). This virus affects your liver.

■ **How Do I Get Hepatitis C?**

Hepatitis C is mainly spread through contact with blood of an infected person

- Sharing needles, syringes and other drug related equipment
- Receiving organ transplants or blood products before 1992
- Sexual intercourse if blood is exchanged
- Tattoos and piercings from improperly sanitized equipment
- Current or former injection drug users
- Sharing personal items-razors, toothbrushes
- Infants born to infected mothers

■ **Most Common Ways Hepatitis C is spread?**

Sharing of contaminated needles, syringes, and other injection drug equipment

■ **What are ways Hepatitis C is not spread?**

- Holding hands
- Hugging or kissing
- Sharing eating or drinking utensils
- Sharing a room with someone
- Sharing food
- Donating blood

■ **Is Hepatitis C Curable?**

Yes, Hepatitis C is curable. With new medication called Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs), Hepatitis C has a cure rate of 96%. Cure means you no longer have the HCV in your blood after you have been treated.

■ **Is There a Vaccine for Hepatitis C?**

There is no Hepatitis C vaccine.

■ **Hepatitis C Testing**

Hepatitis C infection is usually asymptomatic – meaning, people have no symptoms at all. If people do have symptoms, they are often very short lived and mild-*kind of like the stomach flu*. In the United States approximately 2.7-3.9 million people are infected with HCV. About half the people who are infected with HCV have never been tested because they do not feel sick.

■ **Who should get tested?**

- Anyone born during 1945-1965 (Baby-Boomer)
- Anyone who has shared needles, syringes and other drug related equipment (cookers, cotton, straws)-even just once
- Anyone who received blood products or an organ transplant before 1992
- Anyone who has had sexual intercourse if blood was exchanged
- Anyone who has had tattoos and piercings from improperly sanitized equipment
- Current or former injection drug users
- Anyone who has shared personal items-razors, toothbrushes
- Infants born to HCV infected mothers

■ **Protecting Your Liver:**

There are many ways to keep your liver healthy when you have HCV.

- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit your use of alcohol
- Limit your use of acetaminophen, supplements and iron

■ **If you can't get treated for HCV while you are incarcerated**

- Attend all sick call appointments for laboratory tests and follow-up
- Follow up with a liver specialist when you are released from incarceration

■ **Hepatitis C Can be Cured. But you can get re-infected if you do not live a healthy lifestyle after treatment**



For more information ask your nurse about Hepatitis C