



HEPATITIS C

What is Hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV)

What are symptoms that could occur?

- There may be no symptoms **OR** there may be
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- More serious symptoms include fever, abdominal pain, dark urine, light colored stool and/or yellowing of the skin or eyes

How is it spread?

- Through contact with blood and blood products
- Sharing needles, blood transfusions, unprotected sex, occupational exposure and sharing personal care items
- Symptoms begin between two weeks to six months after exposure with an average of 6-9 weeks
- People are contagious one or more weeks before symptoms appear and while the virus is in their body

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation and laboratory testing
- There are treatment options. Please discuss these with your primary care provider

How is it prevented?

- There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C
- Do not shoot drugs; if you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program; if you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water, or "works", and get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes)
- If you are a health care or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps; get vaccinated against hepatitis B
- Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood on them or if the artist or piercer does not follow good health practices
- HCV can be spread by sex, but this is rare. If you are having sex with more than one steady sex partner, use latex condoms correctly and every time to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. You should get vaccinated against hepatitis B
- If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue

Are there complications?

- Up to 85% of cases are infected for longer than six months and become chronic carriers
- Chronic infection may be lifelong and the person contagious to others for their lifetime

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Should the sick child be isolated?

- No

When can the child return to day care or school?

- There is no need to exclude the child from attending school

Should schools do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 257-3612

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider.

5/27/2004