

Hepatitis C

WHO IS AT HIGH RISK OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HEP C)?

At least 75% of people living with Hep C in BC were born between 1945-1975

People born between 1945 - 1975

Hep C screening had not been introduced during this time so some people were infected after receiving a blood transfusion, organ transplant or because medical equipment was not properly cleaned.

People who inject drugs

Men who have sex with men

People living with HIV and or Hepatitis B

Of course, there are other populations at high risk of Hep C infection as well.

IF YOU ARE AT HIGH RISK OF HEP C YOU SHOULD GET TESTED

SHOULD I GET TESTED EVEN IF I DON'T HAVE SYMPTOMS?



Most people infected with Hep C do not experience any symptoms for decades. For those that do, the symptoms are often mild and flu-like, for example, feeling very tired, sore muscles, fever and nausea. These symptoms usually occur within 2 weeks to 6 months of exposure.

For this reason, you should get tested even if you do not have any symptoms. Chronic liver disease can progress very slowly for decades without any symptoms so it's important to get tested if you are in any of the risk groups above.

WHAT IS THE TEST FOR HEP C?



You need to take two tests for Hep C. The first tests for Hep C antibody and will determine if you have ever been infected with Hep C; and second, an RNA test (which measures the genetic material [RNA] of the actual virus) will determine if you are currently infected with Hep C. These tests are commonly done on a standard blood draw.

IS THERE A CURE FOR HEP C?



Yes, there is a new cure for Hep C that is effective 95% of the time. It is a pill that can be taken for a short time (8-12 weeks) called direct-acting antiviral therapies (DAAs).

CAN I USE DOWN OR OTHER DRUGS WHILE TAKING HEP C MEDICATIONS?



Treatment is possible while using illicit drugs; however it is very important to talk about this with your healthcare provider.

CAN I PASS ON HEP C?



Yes, Hep C is primarily passed on through exposure to infectious blood. It is much less common to get Hep C through sexual contact with someone living with an active Hep C infection, although still possible.

CAN I DONATE BLOOD AFTER BEING CURED OF HEP C?



No. Currently, you cannot donate blood if you have ever tested positive for Hep C, regardless of whether you were successfully cured with Hep C medications or your body was able to get rid of the infection with the help of medications.

CAN I GET HEP C AGAIN?



Yes, the chance of getting reinfected with Hep C is possible, regardless of whether you took medication to cure Hep C, or your body was able to get rid of the infection without the help of medication.