



LENAWEE COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# Hepatitis C (Hep C)

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## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). It can be either a short-term (acute) or a long-term (chronic) illness. HCV is primarily transmitted through contact with infected blood.

## How is Hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C is transmitted through the direct contact with blood or body fluids from an infected person

- Sharing needles
- Tattooing, body piercing, and needle -stick injuries
- Sexual contact with an infected person
- Babies born to mothers with Hep C
- Using anything that has come in contact with another person's blood

There is no evidence that hepatitis C can spread from food handlers, teachers, or other service providers without blood-to-blood contact.

## Symptoms

Some people who have hep C will have no symptoms, but some people will develop symptoms 2-12 weeks after exposure

- Dark urine or clay-colored stools
- Feeling tired
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, stomach pain, vomiting
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)

## Acute Hepatitis C

When someone is first infected with HCV, they can either have a very mild illness with few or no symptoms or a serious condition that could require hospitalization.

## Chronic Hepatitis C

Most people who get infected will develop a chronic, or lifelong, infection. Left untreated, chronic hepatitis C can cause serious health problems including liver disease, liver failure, liver cancer, and even death.

## Who is at risk

- If you use injectable drugs
- Have a job that exposes you to human blood
- Received clotting factor concentrates before 1987
- Received blood or other transfusions before July 1992
- Multiple sex partners
- A family member or housemate of an infected person
- If you are infected with HIV
- Are on long term hemodialysis

## Treating Hepatitis C

Oral medications (pills) available called direct-acting antivirals (DAAs). It is possible to be re-infected after treatments.

## Pregnancy

Hepatitis C can be transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy or childbirth. Hepatitis C infection during pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of adverse fetal outcomes, such as low birth weight and fetal growth restriction.

## How is Hepatitis C Prevented

The best way to prevent hepatitis C is by avoiding behaviors that can spread the disease, including:

- Sharing needles, syringes, or another drug equipment
- Practicing poor or unsanitary procedures in health care facilities
- Engaging in sexual activity with a person who is infected with HCV
- Getting unregulated tattoos or body piercings
- Receiving a blood transfusion or organ transplant from a donor with HCV infection

*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 or call the Lenawee County Health Department (517) 264-5226*