

FREE eBOOK
ABOUT HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C Virus

Hepatitis C is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV).

HCV was discovered by investigators at Chiron, Inc. The hepatitis C virus is a positive, single-stranded RNA virus in the *Flaviviridae* family.

For a detailed scientific/medical description of the hepatitis C virus, read an article written by Howard J. Worman, M. D. Click on [hepatitis c virus](#) for more information

There are numerous subtypes of the hepatitis C virus, which are believed to have derived from more than 300 years of endemic infection in certain geographical regions.

No one seems to know for sure where the hepatitis C virus started, but guesses range from 500 to 2000 years ago.

Hepatitis C virus is spread (transmitted) through the blood. But since 1991 all blood donations have been tested for the hepatitis C virus and the risk of transmission through blood is now insignificant.

In fact, since blood is now being routinely screened for the hepatitis C virus, the risk of a single unit of blood transmitting hepatitis C today is less than 1 in 100,000.

Type C hepatitis virus is now often found among intravenous drug users who share contaminated needles.

There are some less common ways to get the hepatitis C virus, including:

- From mother to infant at the time of childbirth
- Through sexual intercourse with a person infected with hepatitis C virus. Having multiple sex partners is a risk factor.
- Needle sticks with hepatitis C virus-contaminated blood: This is mostly seen in health care workers. The risk of developing a hepatitis C virus infection after a needle stick is about 5-10%.
- Sharing a razor, nail clippers, or other such items with someone who has been infected with the hepatitis c virus.
- You can't get the hepatitis C virus by living with, being near, or touching someone with hepatitis C.

The source of transmission is unknown in about 10% of people with acute hepatitis C and in about 30% of people with chronic hepatitis C. For more information you need buy the book All About Hepatitis C in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

The Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

HCV was discovered in 1989 by investigators at Chiron, Inc. Portions of the HCV genome were isolated by screening cDNA expression libraries made from RNA and DNA from chimpanzees infected with serum from a patient with post-transfusion non-A, non-B hepatitis.

[Prior to the discovery of HCV, hepatitis following blood transfusion that was not caused by hepatitis A or hepatitis B was referred to as non-A, non-B hepatitis]. To identify portions of the genome that encoded viral proteins, the libraries were screened with antibodies from patients who had non-A, non-B hepatitis.

These investigators went on to show that the virus they identified was responsible for the vast majority of cases of non-A, non-B hepatitis. They called the new virus hepatitis C virus (HCV). Subsequently, the complete genomes of various HCV isolates were cloned and sequenced by several groups.

For more information you need buy the book All About Hepatitis C in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

HCV is a positive, single-stranded RNA virus in the *Flaviviridae* family. The genome is approximately 10,000 nucleotides and encodes a single polyprotein of about 3,000 amino acids.

The polyprotein is processed by host cell and viral proteases into three major structural proteins and several non-structural protein necessary for viral replication. Several different genotypes of HCV with slightly different genomic sequences have since been identified that correlate with differences in response to treatment with interferon alpha.

Despite the discovery of HCV by molecular biological methods and the sequencing of the entire genome, a permissive cell culture system for propagating HCV has yet to be established. A non-primate animal model also does not exist. As a result, the production of specific drugs against HCV has been impeded although excellent diagnostic methods for have been developed.

Risk Factors for HCV Infection

Approximately 170,000,000 people worldwide and 4,000,000 in the United States are infected with HCV. The virus is transmitted primarily by blood and blood products. The majority of infected individuals have either received blood transfusions prior to 1990 (when screening of the blood supply for HCV was implemented) or have used intravenous drugs.

Sexual transmission between monogamous couples is rare but HCV infection is more common in sexually promiscuous individuals. Perinatal transmission from mother to fetus or infant is also relatively low but possible (less than 10%). Many individuals infected with HCV have no obvious risk factors. Most of these persons have probably been inadvertently exposed to contaminated blood or blood products.

Hepatitis C Symptom

Many people who are infected with the hepatitis C do not have symptoms. In fact, patients with hepatitis C do not develop symptoms until they have progressed to advanced cirrhosis of the liver.

The following hepatitis C symptoms *could* occur:

Abdominal pain or tenderness (right upper abdomen)

Aches, fever, chills

Ascites(buildup of fluid in the abdomen)

Bleeding varices (dilated veins in the esophagus)

Fatigue

Itching

Jaundice

Loss of appetite

Low-grade fever

Nausea and vomiting

Stools that are pale or clay colored

Urine that is unusually dark

Hepatitis C Transmission

Hepatitis C virus is spread, or transmitted, through the blood. But since 1991 all blood has been tested for type C hepatitis and the risk of transmission through blood is now insignificant.

Type C hepatitis is now often found among intravenous drug users who share contaminated needles.

Hepatitis can also be caused by exposure to alcohol, certain medications, chemicals, poisons, and other toxins, or by other diseases. For more information you need buy the book All About Hepatitis C in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

There are some less common causes of hepatitis C transmission, including:

- From mother to infant at the time of childbirth
- Through sexual intercourse with a person infected with hepatitis C. Having multiple sex partners is a risk factor for hepatitis C transmission.
- Needle sticks with hepatitis C-contaminated blood: This means of hepatitis C transmission is mostly seen in health care workers. The risk of developing a hepatitis C infection after a needle stick is about 5-10%.
- Sharing a razor, nail clippers, or other such items with an infected person.

You can't get hepatitis C by living with, being near, or touching someone with the disease.

The source of hepatitis C transmission is unknown in about 10% of people with acute hepatitis C and in about 30% of people with chronic hepatitis c.

For more information you need buy the book **All About Hepatitis C** in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

Consequences of HCV Infection

About 85% of individuals acutely infected with HCV become chronically infected. Hence, HCV is a major cause of chronic (lasting longer than six months) hepatitis. Once chronically infected, the virus is almost never cleared without treatment. In rare cases, HCV infection causes clinically acute disease and even liver failure, however, most instances of acute infection are clinically undetectable.

The natural history of chronic HCV infection can vary dramatically between individuals. Some will have clinically insignificant or minimal liver disease and never develop complications.

Others will have clinically apparent chronic hepatitis. Of these, some go on to develop [cirrhosis](#), however, the exact percentages is not known. About 20% of individuals with hepatitis C who do develop cirrhosis will develop end-stage liver disease.

Cirrhosis caused by hepatitis C is presently the leading indication for [orthotopic liver transplantation](#) in the United States. Individuals with cirrhosis from hepatitis C are also at an increased risk of developing [hepatocellular carcinoma \(primary liver cancer\)](#). For more information you need buy the book [All About Hepatitis C](#) in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

A major problem in discussing prognosis in patients with [chronic hepatitis C](#) is that it is difficult to predict who will have a relatively benign course and who will go on to develop cirrhosis or cancer.

One fairly clear factor for progression to cirrhosis is concurrent alcohol abuse. Certain findings on liver biopsy can also be helpful in predicting a relatively benign or progressive course. Viral genotype may also play a role. Additional research is urgently needed to identify host factors that are important in determining prognosis in chronic hepatitis C.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of chronic hepatitis C is made by history, serological testing and liver biopsy. Most patients with chronic hepatitis C will be asymptomatic or have non-specific symptoms such as fatigue. In some individuals, the diagnosis will be suspected from the results of blood tests obtained for other reason (usually elevations in the serum [alanine and aspartate aminotransferase](#) activities).

Individuals suspected of having chronic hepatitis C include:

1. Those with symptoms of chronic liver disease
2. Those with risk factors such as past or current intravenous drug use or blood transfusions prior to 1990
3. Those with abnormal laboratory tests suggesting liver disease

Such individuals should be tested for the presence of serum antibodies against HCV. The presence of anti-HCV antibodies in a person with a risk factor or evidence of liver disease strongly suggests the diagnosis of chronic hepatitis C.

The absence of anti-HCV antibodies generally rules out the diagnosis. Tests for HCV RNA in blood should be done in those individuals with anti-HCV antibodies to confirm the diagnosis and in the rare patient who does not have anti-HCV antibodies but in whom the diagnosis is still strongly suspected on clinical grounds.

Such testing should also be performed in patients who will undergo treatment. After making the diagnosis, a liver biopsy is usually indicated to assess the degree of liver inflammation and fibrosis and the presence or [absence of cirrhosis](#). For more information you need buy the book [All About Hepatitis C](#) in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

Hepatitis C Prevention

There is no cure or vaccine for hepatitis C. There is only prevention. If you wish to avoid becoming infected with hepatitis C, take the following prevention steps:

Hepatitis C Prevention Tip 1: Do not use intravenous drugs. If you shoot drugs, stop and seek the help of a treatment program. If you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water. Get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B.

Hepatitis C Prevention Tip 2: Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them, like razors and toothbrushes. **Hepatitis C Prevention Tip 3:** If you are a health care or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier precautions. Be sure to handle needles and other sharp objects carefully and safely. Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C Prevention Tip 4: If you are thinking about getting a tattoo or having a body part pierced, be extremely careful. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood.

Hepatitis C Prevention Tip 5: Hepatitis C can be spread by sexual contact, but this is rare. If you are having sex with more than one steady sex partner, it's recommended that you use latex condoms correctly, and use them every time you have intercourse. You should also get vaccinated against hepatitis B.

If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue. Some patients with hepatitis C benefit from treatment with interferon alpha or a combination of interferon alpha and [ribavirin](#).

For more information on treatment with medicines, click on [hepatitis C medications](#).

Rest may be recommended during the [acute](#) phase of the disease when the symptoms are most severe.

People with hepatitis C should also be careful not to take vitamins, nutritional supplements, or new over-the-counter medications without first discussing it with a doctor.

Any substance that's toxic to the liver, or [hepatotoxic](#), can be dangerous for someone who has been infected by hepatitis C. You should stop drinking alcohol. Even moderate amounts of alcohol can be dangerous because they speed up the progression of hepatitis C. Alcohol reduces the effectiveness of hepatitis C treatment.

For information on alternatives to traditional means of treating hepatitis C, see [alternative hepatitis C treatment](#). For more information you need buy the book **All About Hepatitis C** in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

Treatment

All patients with chronic hepatitis C should be evaluated by a specialist for possible treatment with these agents. In general, adults less than 70 years old with evidence of active inflammation on liver biopsy and without advanced cirrhosis are good treatment candidates.

Indications for treatment of patients with very mild disease on liver biopsy are less clear. Such individuals should be considered for possible participation in clinical studies. Patients with advanced cirrhosis secondary to hepatitis C should be referred for evaluation for possible [liver transplantation](#).

Hepatitis Cure

There is no cure or vaccine for hepatitis C. There is only [hepatitis C prevention](#). If you wish to avoid becoming infected with hepatitis C:

Do not use intravenous drugs. If you shoot drugs, stop and seek the help of a treatment program. If you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water. Get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B. Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them, like razors and toothbrushes.

If you are a health care or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier precautions. Be sure to handle needles and other sharp objects carefully and safely. Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.

If you are thinking about getting a tattoo or having a body part pierced, be extremely careful. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood. For more information <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com>

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If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue.

Some patients with hepatitis C benefit from treatment with interferon alpha or a combination of [interferon alpha and ribavirin](#).

For more information on treatment with medicines, click on [hepatitis C medications](#).

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People with hepatitis C should also be careful not to take vitamins, nutritional supplements, or new over-the-counter [hepatitis C medications](#) without first discussing it with a doctor. For more information you need buy the book **All About Hepatitis C** in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

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For information on alternatives to traditional means of treating hepatitis C, see [alternative hepatitis C treatment](#).

Hepatitis C Alternative Medicine

There are various reasons why people seek alternative medicine for hepatitis C treatment. Traditional [hepatitis C treatments](#) may not have helped. Or they may have had severe side effects from [hepatitis C medications](#) and they don't want to continue with those treatments.

They might also be battling problems from other diseases and conditions that can be caused by or worsened by hepatitis C. For more information you need buy the book **All About Hepatitis C** in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

No alternative, natural, or complementary medicine treatment has been scientifically proven to successfully treat hepatitis C. But authors who have done recent analyses of the scientific work have found some results that are encouraging.

The most promising complementary therapy is [milk thistle](#). The active ingredient in milk thistle is thought to be a substance called silymarin. Studies done in animals suggest that silymarin may have [antioxidant](#) and anti-inflammatory effects that promote liver health in a number of ways.

Unfortunately, results are not conclusive because some studies showed a positive effect while others didn't.

Milk thistle is available as capsules but not as tea.

Licorice and ginseng are thought to have some positive effect because it's believed they help boost the body's ability to fight infection. Experts recommend that you be extremely careful with licorice, however. If you take too much, it can cause high blood.

Hepatitis C Medication

The doctor may prescribe [interferon](#) and [ribavirin](#), which are two medications that are licensed for the treatment of persons with chronic hepatitis C.

Interferon alpha, also known as Intron A, is a protein that the body makes to fight viral infection. It also has other actions in the body and has been used to treat a variety of diseases such as leukemia and other types of cancers. It has also been used to treat multiple sclerosis.

Interferon can be harmful to an unborn child, so persons taking interferon must practice effective birth control during treatment for hepatitis C and for at least 6 months afterward.

Interferon can be taken by itself, or in combination with ribavirin. Combination therapy, using pegylated interferon* and ribavirin, is currently the treatment of choice. Pegylation describes a chemical process that makes the interferon last longer in the body.

Ribavirin, also known as Virazole, is like an antibiotic for certain viruses. By itself, ribavirin has little effect on HCV, but it can be an effective hepatitis C medication effective in combination with interferon.

Most people tolerate these hepatitis C medications fairly well, but some side effects are common. These side effects range from mild to debilitating. If they are severe enough, the person may have to stop taking one or both [hepatitis C medications](#), or take a lower doses. Unfortunately, lower doses generally don't work as well.

Side effects of interferon are similar to having the flu. Side effects often get better as treatment for hepatitis C continues. Common side effects of interferon include:

- Fatigue
- Low hemoglobin level in the blood (anemia) or low blood cell counts
- Muscle aches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Mild fevers
- Depression
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Weight loss

There can be other, less common side effects with hepatitis C medications. You should discuss these with your health care provider before starting your hepatitis C treatment.

The side effects of ribavirin can be severe enough that the patient wants to stop taking it and to continue with interferon-only. Like interferon, ribavirin can be harmful to an unborn child, and persons taking ribavirin must practice effective birth control during treatment and for at least 6 months afterward. Ribavirin side effects include:

- Anemia
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Itching
- Skin rash
- Sinus congestion and cough

For more information about herbs and supplements used in hepatitis C treatment, click on [hepatitis c alternative medicine](#). For more information you need buy the book **All About Hepatitis C** in <http://hepatitis-c.50webs.com/>

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[How do people become infected with hepatitis C?](#)

[How can I reduce the likelihood of spreading the hepatitis C virus?](#)

[What does the liver do?](#)

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18. Sir, Since last three years I was suffering from stomach problem—the problem actually is...what ever I use to eat...it does not get proper digest...! mean after eating food breakfast, lunch or dinner) just after 1 or maximum 2 hours I have to rush to bathroom (toilet)...I consulted private surgeon doctor for this purpose...he told me to have endoscopy...for stomach...I did that...and result was gas problem—and swelling inside stomach...! Have routine medicine for three weeks the problem was solved a bit, but over all still I have gas problem now—and what ever I eat it ...it feels to me that it is still not digested properly—and food is in-between my stomach and liver—.now I can you please guide me what exactly I should do ?27

19. The cause of cryoglobulinemia by a Liver Disease? How? Why? And what is the cause? And best treatment of this disease?27

20. Is it true that the liver can regenerate damaged cells?28

- 21. Well I had an x-ray or some type of scan and on my file from films-it said I have a 5mm spot oil the right lobe of my liver, and I would like to know could it be not serious...or is it normal to have a spot on your liver what could it be.....28
- 22. I have Hepatic Steatosis, and what I would like to know is will it stay like this or there is a real risk of turning into fibrosis, and if so what is the percentage of this happening?28
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- 27. I have Toxic Hepatitis -drug induces apparently. I have had RA for 23 years and have been on Methotrexate, Arava, Paracetamol for pain, Vioxx etc, for some years. Recently I have had several courses of antibiotics for MRS infection. My question is, is there any way at all to tell which drug was the culprit? I am off all RA drugs and painkillers and am dreading the flare-up of RA that I know will soon come.....31
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- 32. How can you slow the disease down, what are the best thing to eat, drink to help?33
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- 37. My spouse liver function mildly elevated. How does this happen and how can he fix this?.....36

38. My husbands liver function test has been high ("between 300 and 500) for the last year now, the doctors have said that this could have been caused by medication but they are not certain, in am concerned that the doctors are not doing enough to find about the cause, asmhe has never drank alcohol and has never smoked, can you give me any ideas that could be causing this?.....38

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40. I have liver damage through taking methotrexate to control arthritis along with psoriasis. I also suffer from insomnia, and have been told that this happens when the liver is compromised. My question is "how does the liver control our sleep patterns???".....38

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48. My ensigns are high in my liver, from blood test I am heavy none smoker, drinker drugs! Been working out taking allot of protein drinks as well as vitamins*! Am a veggen eater, but I been eating meat the past His because I am lifting weights. But I have stop, and went back to veggies! Had pain on my right side I thought it was muscle but I guess it my be my liver! Don't have medical so it becomes expensive, for testing! Was thinking of a natural cleansing, what do you think? By the way my levels where, GOT (AST)-59.1 H, NORMAL RANGE (G-4G), GPT (ALT)-56.4, NORMAL RANGE (0 38).....48

49. I suffer from several diseases. Diabetes, histoplasmosis, bone and disk disease. I take many different drugs. I've recently been diagnosed with high liver enzymes. My Doctor is eliminating drugs one at a time, testing weekly and they continue to rise. Without pain killers I am mostly confined to a whell chair, without the steroids for the histoplasmosis my lifespan will be greatly compromised. Without the insulin death is almost certain. Any ideas?48

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