



Hepatitis C

Disease and Testing Facts



Fast Facts

In the U.S.,
3 to 4 million
people are infected with
the hepatitis C virus.

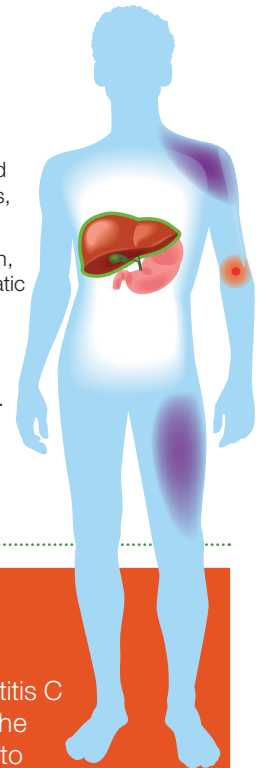
Worldwide, about
150 million
people are chronically
infected with the hepatitis C
virus, and more than
350,000 people die every
year from hepatitis C-
related liver diseases.¹

Approximately
40 percent
of people exposed to
hepatitis C recover fully,
but the remainder, whether
they have symptoms or
not, become chronic
carriers.²

The Centers for
Disease Control (CDC)
recommends anyone
**born between
1945 and 1965**
(baby boomers) be tested
for hepatitis C.

What Is Hepatitis?

- Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is transmitted through contact with the blood of an infected person, commonly through blood transfusions, organ transplants and infected needles, or by an infected mother to her baby.
- The incubation period for hepatitis C is two weeks to six months. Following initial infection, approximately 80 percent of people do not exhibit any symptoms. People who are symptomatic may exhibit fever, fatigue, decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, joint pain and jaundice.¹
- Acute hepatitis C virus infection is a short-term illness that occurs within the first six months after someone is exposed to HCV. For most people, acute infection leads to chronic infection. Chronic hepatitis C is a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems or even death.
- Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver cancer.² Over time, chronic hepatitis C can also cause serious health problems, including liver damage and cirrhosis.



Types of Hepatitis C Tests



Hepatitis C can completely be cured, unlike HIV and hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C Antibody – Doctors can diagnose hepatitis C using specific blood tests to look for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. Antibodies are molecules released into the bloodstream when a person becomes infected.

Hepatitis C Genotype – Once HCV is diagnosed, doctors order a hepatitis C genotype test to find out what type or strain of the hepatitis C virus is present. They need to know this in order to prescribe the most effective course of treatment for their patients.

Hepatitis C Viral Load – Throughout treatment, hepatitis C viral load tests are used to monitor the level of hepatitis C virus in a patient's blood and to also understand if the virus has been successfully cleared.

Risk Factors



Testing for chronic hepatitis C is recommended for certain groups, including people who:

- Were born between 1945 and 1965 (baby boomers).
- Received donated blood or organs before 1992.
- Have ever injected drugs, even if it was just once many years ago.
- Have certain medical conditions, such as chronic liver disease and HIV or AIDS.

References

1. World Health Organization. *Hepatitis C Fact Sheet*, No. 164. July 2012.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Travelers' Health*, Map 3-05: Prevalence of Chronic Hepatitis C Infection. July 2011.
3. World Hepatitis Alliance. *Viral Hepatitis: Global Policy*. April 2010.