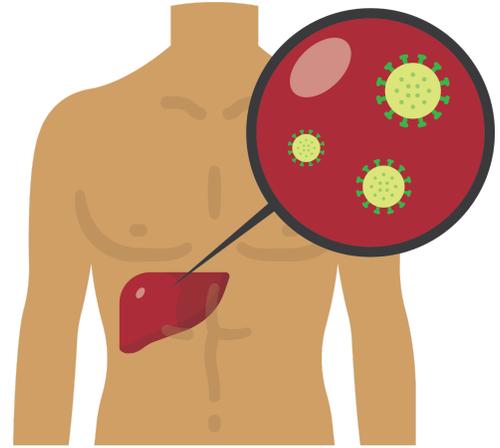


Hepatitis C Virus Screening Guide

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is an infection that causes liver inflammation. On March 2, 2020, the United States Preventive Services Task Force released an updated recommendation on screening for HCV infection, concluding that screening should be provided to all adults aged 18 to 79 years.

Why is HCV screening important? Infection rates have increased in communities across the nation, but especially among Native and non-Hispanic white populations. From 2010 to 2017, acute or short-lived HCV infection nearly tripled due to multiple factors. Screening for HCV is important as it reduces your risk of scarring in the liver, liver cancer, and liver failure.



How is HCV spread?

HCV is spread when the blood of an infected person enters the bloodstream of an uninfected person.

What are the symptoms of HCV?

An HCV infection always emerges suddenly. While some cases will be short-lived, others can develop into more chronic conditions. This is because initial infections rarely cause signs or symptoms in the early stages, and are often left undiagnosed and untreated. Symptoms of HCV infection may appear one to three months after exposure, and may include:

- Yellow discoloration of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Fever
- Muscle aches

Chronic HCV usually has no signs or symptoms until the infection damages the liver enough for them to become apparent. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Bleeding or bruising easily
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite
- Yellow discoloration of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Dark-colored urine

- Itchy skin
- Fluid buildup in your abdomen
- Swelling in your legs
- Weight loss
- Confusion, drowsiness, and slurred speech
- Spider-like blood vessels on your skin

Am I at risk?

There are many ways a person could be at risk for HCV. You may be at risk if you:

- Are a healthcare worker who has been exposed to infected blood, which may happen if an infected needle pierces your skin
- Have ever injected or inhaled illegal drugs
- Have human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Received a piercing or tattoo in an unclean environment using unsterile equipment
- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- Received clotting factor concentrate (to prevent bleeding) before 1987
- Received hemodialysis treatment for a long period of time
- Were born to a woman with an HCV infection
- Were ever in prison
- Were born between 1945 and 1965

How can I protect myself and my family?

Protect yourself from HCV by taking the following precautions:

- **Practice safe sex.** Don't engage in unprotected sex with any partner whose health status is uncertain. Sexual transmission between partners may occur, but the risk is low.
- **Be cautious about body piercing and tattooing.** Look for a reputable shop, ask questions beforehand about how the equipment is cleaned, and make sure the employee uses sterile needles. If the staff won't answer your questions, look for another shop.
- **Stop using injection drugs or be cautious with needles.** If you use drugs, do not share needles, and seek recovery help.

