

Hepatitis C

Also called HCV or HepC

Hepatitis C is a virus. If it is not treated it can cause serious liver damage and make you very unwell. But it can usually be treated easily. **More than 9 in 10 people with hepatitis C can now get rid of the virus by taking tablets. Most people have no side effects.**

Quick summary:

- Hepatitis C is a virus that can damage your liver.
- It is passed on by blood to blood contact.
- Many people won't have symptoms for many years after picking up hepatitis C.
- Hepatitis C can be diagnosed and checked using blood tests.
- There is no vaccine against hepatitis C.
- Treatment is taking tablets for 8-12 weeks.
- Most people have no side effects.
- **If not treated, hepatitis C can continue to damage your liver. This can lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer.**

What causes hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus (BBV). This means it is only passed on when blood from someone with the virus gets into someone else's blood.

- In the UK the most common way this happens is when people share needles or other equipment for injecting drugs.
- Before 1991, some people got the virus through blood transfusions.
- It is possible to pick up hepatitis C through sex, but this is rare. The risk is higher for people who have HIV, particularly men who have sex with men.
- Razors, piercing needles, and other things that might have blood on them can also pass on hepatitis C if they are not sterilised.
- It is possible for a mother with hepatitis C to pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or birth. With good testing and treatment this is now very rare in the UK.



Liver UK is the new name
for the British Liver Trust
and Children's Liver
Disease Foundation

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There are two stages of hepatitis C

Acute hepatitis C

This might also be called "recently acquired hepatitis C". It lasts about 6 months. Most people have no symptoms during this stage.

Chronic hepatitis C

If you still have the virus after six months this is called chronic hepatitis C. Chronic means long-lasting.

Tests for hepatitis C

You can get a blood test for hepatitis C from your GP, local sexual health clinic and some drug treatment services. Most people will have two tests, but these can often be done using the same blood sample.

Antibody test

This is the first test most people have. It looks for antibodies against hepatitis C in your blood. If you are immunosuppressed, or if you have had hepatitis C before, you will not have an antigen test.

RNA or PCR test

If your first test finds antibodies (a positive result), you will have another blood test to look for a part of the virus called the RNA.

If both tests are positive, that means you have active hepatitis C virus in your body.

Other tests

You might have some more blood tests

- A viral load test to find out how much virus is in your blood.
- A Genotype test to find out which type of hepatitis C virus you have.



If there is any chance you could have hepatitis C, always get tested. Even if you have no symptoms.

Treatment for hepatitis C

The medicines now used to treat hepatitis C are called "direct acting antivirals" or DAAs. DAAs are tablets that you take every day for 8 to 12 weeks.

The treatment is very safe, works very well, and most people have no side effects.

Clearing the virus

When you have been successfully treated, you might be told that you have "cleared the virus" or have a "sustained virological response" (SVR).

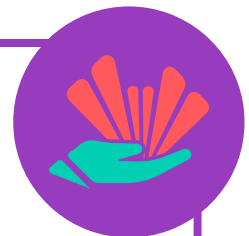
This is great news! It means there is no more virus causing harm to your liver. And you cannot pass hepatitis C on to anyone else.

But it is possible to get hepatitis C again. So always take care to prevent a new infection.

How we can help

The Liver UK support team are here for you and for your family and friends. Find out more more at liveruk.org/support

Call our nurse-led helpline to talk to one of our team: **0800 652 7330**



For more information about hepatitis C and links to support visit liveruk.org/hepatitis-c or scan the QR code.

