LIVER UK

Hepatitis C

Also called HCV or Hep C



Hepatitis C is a virus.
It can usually be treated easily. But if not treated it can cause serious liver damage.

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.

liveruk.org

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

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, tattoo tools, 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.

Tests for hepatitis C

You can get a blood test from your GP, local sexual health clinic and some drug treatment services.

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

If you live in England, you can order a **FREE home test** by going to **hepctest.nhs.uk**.

Most people will have two tests, but these can often be done using the same blood sample.

Antibody test

Looks for antibodies against hepatitis C. If you are immunosuppressed, or if you have had hepatitis C before, you will not have this test.

RNA or PCR test

Looks for a part of the virus called the RNA.

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

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.

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 lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer.

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.

Information and support for you

It's normal to have questions or need some support. Liver UK are here for you.

To speak to someone who understands, call the **FREE Liver UK nurse helpline** on **0800 652 7330**.

We have lots of information about hepatitis C. You can also join a support group or our online community.

To find out more scan the code or visit

www.liveruk.org/hep-c



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This resource provides general information but does not replace personal medical advice. It is important to contact your medical team if you have any worries or concerns.

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