



The Sexual Health Clinic aims to use language that everyone can relate to. People use different words to describe their bodies. This document uses medical terms such as vagina and breast to describe genitals, but some people may use other terms such as private parts, front hole, or chest. We acknowledge and respect that people use words that they are comfortable with.

HEPATITIS C

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus. It is transmitted by blood contact. It can also be transmitted by sexual contact if there is contact with blood. There is no vaccine to prevent the infection, but treatment is available. Many people who live with hepatitis C infection don't have symptoms. Without testing or treatment, the liver can become damaged and cause liver diseases.

What are the symptoms?

Most people don't have symptoms, or only mild symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)
- Dark urine, pale stools
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, poor appetite

How does someone get Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is passed through blood contact with someone who has the virus.

Transmission can happen through:

- Sharing equipment to inject, snort or smoke drugs such as needles, syringes, cookers, filters stems, bills, and straws.
- Having received blood, blood products, or immunoglobulin before 1992.
- Tattoos, body piercing or modifications, acupuncture, manicures, or pedicures with equipment that has not been sterilized (cleaned properly).
- Sharing personal hygiene items such as razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers
- Transmission to the infant during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Condomless sex where there is a higher risk of blood transmission, such as anal sex, rough sex, sex during a menstrual period and party and play (combining drug use with sexual activity).

How do I get tested for hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C is diagnosed with a blood test.
- Blood tests can reveal if an individual currently has hepatitis C (active infection), or has had hepatitis C in the past (resolved infection).
- After exposure, it can take up to 6 months for a blood test to be positive. You may be encouraged to repeat testing if the exposure was recent.

- Even if someone clears the virus (on their own or with treatment), they can get hepatitis C again.

What happens if I have a positive for Hepatitis C?

- Treatment is available to clear an active infection. You will be referred to a specialist to access treatment.
- About one in four (25%) people can clear hepatitis C without treatment.

How do I reduce my risks?

- Use an internal or external condom every time you have vaginal or anal sex.
- Use an external condom or dental dam every time you have oral sex.
- Use water-based or silicone-based lubricants.
- If you share sex toys, cover the toy with a condom and clean after each use.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections regularly.
- Use new equipment every time you inject, including needles, syringes, cookers, filters, and water.
- Never share drug equipment with anyone, including your sex partners.
- Access Needle and Syringe Programs or Supervised Consumption Services for new equipment and harm reduction services.

For more information:

- Canadian Liver Foundation - www.liver.ca, or call 1-800-563-5483
- Health Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- www.catie.ca (Canada's source of HIV and hep C information) or call their toll-free telephone line at 1-800-236-1638

The Site Harm Reduction Program

Site Office (Needle & Syringe and Supervised Consumption Services)

179 Clarence Street, 9am-5pm daily
613-580-2424 ext. 29047

Site Van- Mobile harm reduction services

5pm-11:30pm daily
613-232-3232 (collect calls accepted)