



**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

Hepatitis C

Talk to your partner(s) about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and your health before you have sex. You can pass on an STI without knowing you have one. During sex, you can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting STIs.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that can cause a serious infection of the liver. It is a reportable infection, meaning that if you test positive for Hepatitis C, you may be contacted by a clinic or health department to get contact information for current and past sexual partners for notification and testing purposes. Your name is not disclosed when a current or past sexual partner is notified.

How do you get Hepatitis C?

The most common way a person can be infected by Hepatitis C is by sharing needles. It is also possible to spread Hepatitis C by sharing equipment used for tattooing, body piercing, acupuncture and snorting drugs. Current research shows that the risk of transmitting Hepatitis C through sexual contact is low. Hepatitis C is not spread by casual contact such as hugging, kissing or shaking hands.

How can you tell if you have Hepatitis C?

Only 20% of people who are infected with Hepatitis C develop symptoms like fever, fatigue, weight loss and jaundice (yellowing of the skin). Because the disease progresses slowly, symptoms may not appear until many years after the initial infection.

Is there a test for Hepatitis C?

Yes. There is a blood test that can confirm whether or not you have the antibody against Hepatitis C. The presence of the antibody suggests you have been infected with the virus, but it cannot tell us when it happened. It generally takes 8-9 weeks for your body to develop the antibodies after exposure.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

What are the long-term effects of Hepatitis C?

Unfortunately 75-85% of people who have Hepatitis C will develop ongoing problems of the liver including liver failure and liver cancer.

Is there a cure for Hepatitis C?

There is no cure for Hepatitis C. A small number of people get very mild cases of Hepatitis C. They are able to get rid of the disease within six months. For those who have chronic (life-long) infection, there are treatments available that may reduce the risk of developing serious liver problems.

Is there a vaccine for Hepatitis C?

No. There is no vaccine available at this time. Vaccination against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B will not protect you against Hepatitis C.

How can I protect myself from Hepatitis C?

Since infected needles mainly spread the virus, it is important not to share needles and related equipment with others. Using a condom when you have sex will also reduce the risk of becoming infected with Hepatitis C.

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.