Hepatitis C: What You Need to Know

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation (swelling). Hepatitis C can lead to serious liver damage. The hepatitis C virus is spread through contact with HCV-infected blood.

Basic Facts

- Many people with hepatitis C don’t know they have it, mainly because symptoms can take decades to appear.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that all adults aged 18 to 79 years be screened for hepatitis C.
- All pregnant women should be screened for hepatitis C early in their pregnancy.

Source: cdc.gov
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How it Spreads

Hepatitis C is spread through contact with blood from an infected person. Today, most people become infected with the hepatitis C virus by sharing needles or other equipment used to prepare and inject drugs.

Diagnosis

Blood tests, magnetic resonance elastography (MRE), transient elastography, and possibly a liver biopsy.

Treatment

Safe and effective medications are available to treat and possibly cure hepatitis C.

Prevention

There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C. The best way to prevent hepatitis C is by avoiding behaviors that can spread the disease, especially injecting drugs with non-sterile injection equipment.

Acute Symptoms

- Jaundice
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Fever
- Muscle aches

Chronic Symptoms

- Bleeding easily
- Bruising easily
- Fatigue
- No appetite
- Jaundice
- Dark-colored urine
- Itchy skin
- Fluid buildup in the stomach area
- Swelling in the legs
- Weight loss
- Confusion, drowsiness, and slurred speech
- Spiderlike blood vessels on the skin

Source: cdc.gov