

Fact Sheet

Disease:	Viral Hepatitis (C)
Overview:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. • The virus can cause both acute and chronic hepatitis, ranging in severity from a mild illness (lasting a few weeks) to a serious (lifelong illness). • The hepatitis C virus is a bloodborne virus and the most common modes of infection are through exposure to small quantities of blood. This may happen through injection drug use, unsafe injection practices, unsafe health care, and the transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products. • Antiviral medicines can cure more than 90% of persons with hepatitis C infection. • There is currently no vaccine for hepatitis C.
Introduction	<p>Hepatitis C virus (HCV) causes both acute and chronic infection. Acute HCV infection is usually asymptomatic. About 15–45% of infected persons spontaneously clear the virus within 6 months of infection without any treatment. The remaining 55–85% of persons will develop chronic HCV infection.</p>
Causes:	Hepatitis C Transmission.

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Transmission

It is most commonly transmitted through:

- Reuse or inadequate sterilization of medical equipment, especially syringes and needles in healthcare settings.
- Transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products.
- Sexual relations.
- Drug use injection.
- Infection during pregnancy (HVC can be passed from an infected mother to her baby; though much less common).

Hepatitis C is not spread through breast milk, food, water or by casual contact and sharing food or drinks with an infected person.

Symptoms:

Approximately 80% of people do not exhibit any symptoms. Those who are acutely symptomatic may exhibit:

- Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).
- Abdominal pain.
- Dark urine and grey-colored faeces.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Appetite loss.
- Joint pains.

Diagnosis:

Lab Tests.

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<p>Incubation Period</p>	<p>The incubation period for hepatitis C is 2 months to 6 months.</p>
<p>Risk Factor:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being a sexual partner of someone with acute hepatitis C infection. ● People who inject or use intranasal drugs. ● People who have had tattoos or piercings.
<p>Higher Susceptibility Groups:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children born to mothers infected with HCV. ● People with HIV infection. ● People interned in prisons.
<p>Complications:</p>	<p>It is very rarely associated with life-threatening disease. Yet, people diagnosed with HCV for years may suffer acute complications, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cirrhosis. ● Liver cancer. ● Fibrosis.
<p>Prevention:</p>	<p>Primary Prevention:</p> <p>There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. However, WHO recommends the following primary prevention interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hand hygiene: including surgical hand preparation. ● Safe handling and disposal of sharps and waste.

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- testing of donated blood for hepatitis B and C, as well as HIV and syphilis.
- Training of health personnel on preventive measure.

Secondary Prevention:

For people infected with the hepatitis C virus, WHO recommends:

- Education and counselling on options for care and treatment.
- Immunization with the hepatitis A and B vaccines.
- Early and appropriate medical management including antiviral therapy if appropriate.
- Regular monitoring for early diagnosis of chronic liver disease.

Treatment:

Hepatitis usually can be cured by antiviral drugs. Researchers have achieved high cure rates of HCV using new direct-acting antiviral medicines, in addition to available ones. Hence, better results, less side-effects and shorter treatment periods are in place.

References:

- WHO
<http://www.who.int/en/>

**Health Enhancement and Health Education General
Department**

For more information, please email us on:

Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa