

## Hepatitis C prevention for people who snort or inject drugs

The only way to know if you have hepatitis C (HCV) is to get tested. You can prevent HCV infection by not sharing or using anything that may have blood on it – razors, syringes, toothbrushes, snorting straws, tweezers, mixing water, etc. Hepatitis C is very infectious, and it only takes a very small amount of the virus entering your blood stream to cause infection. The tissue inside your nose, punctured skin, and bleeding gums and lips are perfect examples of places to transmit HCV. If you had hepatitis C in the past, you can become infected again! Prevention is key to protecting your liver and quite possibly saving your life!

## What can I do for myself today?

Get tested for hepatitis C. If you're positive, seek immediate medical care for your liver. If you're negative, stay negative by always using your own, personal equipment for any drug use and preparation. This includes syringes, cookers, cotton, water, tourniquets, surface coverings, etc.

While hepatitis C may not compare to your concerns about employment, family, or drug use, there is a cure and HCV be eliminated from your life. If you are ready, there are options for reducing or eliminating your drug use altogether. Talk with a trained professional, your healthcare provider, a social worker, an addictions counselor, or a self-help group (AA, NA) about what options might be right for you.

## Why should people who snort or inject drugs be tested for hepatitis C?

HCV is transmitted through contact with contaminated blood. Since 1992, transmission of HCV through medical procedures and blood transfusions has dramatically declined and today only accounts for a very small number of HCV transmissions. Today the most common way to transmit HCV is through sharing items used during drug use including shared snorting straws, syringes, cookers, cotton and water. In certain conditions, HCV can live outside of the body up to six weeks, making drug-using environments an easy place to transmit HCV. There is a cure for HCV and everyone deserves to live their healthiest life free of HCV.

Even if you feel healthy,  
you could still have  
**Hepatitis C**

Left untreated, it can  
lead to liver cancer.  
**Talk to your doctor.**

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# People who use Drugs

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# HEPATITIS



**DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE.  
IT AFFECTS MILLIONS  
AND CAUSES LIVER CANCER.**

Talk to your doctor about testing. Early detection saves lives.

[www.CaringAmbassadors.org](http://www.CaringAmbassadors.org)

# Liver Health

Your liver is a pretty cool organ and is often called the 'non-complaining' organ. Your liver is located on the right side of your body and acts as your body's filter. Therefore, everything you eat, drink, smell, and absorb through your skin gets processed through the liver, which means it may be frequently exposed to alcohol and various toxins. Since the liver does not complain, we often do not know when something is wrong.

**Liver disease is on the rise, and liver cancer is now the second leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide.**

There are a few culprits that put the liver at risk, one being Fatty Liver Disease, also called Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH). NASH develops when there is an excess buildup of fat in the liver. Also, you don't even have to be overweight to have a fatty liver! Cirrhosis is caused by inflammation in the liver which causes scar

## YOUR LIVER IS...

- On your right side under your ribcage
- Your largest organ without nerves
- Your body's filter system - all that you eat, drink, smell or absorb goes through your liver

tissue buildup in the liver and increases the chance of developing liver cancer. Viruses can cause liver damage, too. Among them are hepatitis A and B which are both preventable through vaccination. Hepatitis C is the most common chronic blood-borne virus in the US. Hepatitis C was unable to be tested for until 1992, and therefore it lived in blood and tissue banks for decades before it was identified. Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver disease, and most people don't know they have it. Talk with your healthcare provider about a series of liver function tests including a hepatitis C antibody test, and hepatitis A and B vaccinations to protect your liver.

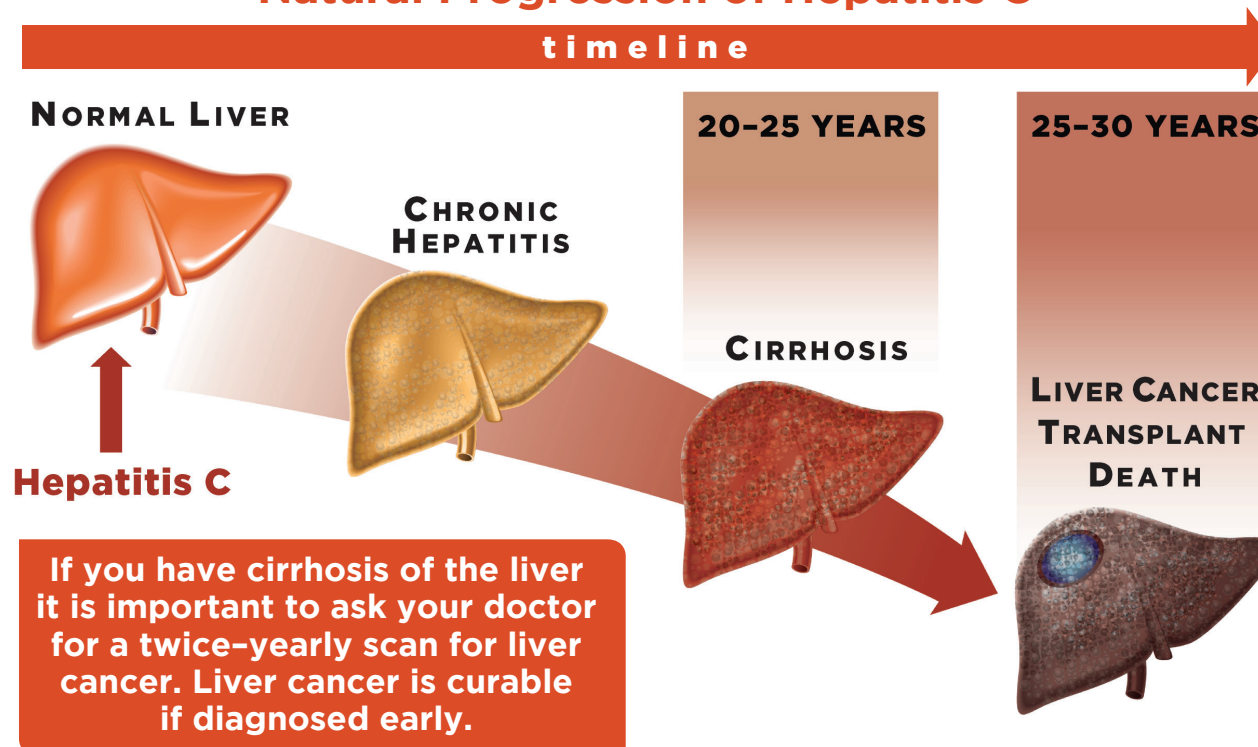


## WHAT CAN HURT YOUR LIVER?

- A diet high in fat
- Viruses like hepatitis A, B and C
- Toxins like lead-based paint, pesticides, solvents, etc.
- Alcohol, some medications (even over the counter), and some street drugs

**Always ask your healthcare provider before taking a new product to make sure it is not toxic to the liver.**

## Natural Progression of Hepatitis C



## HOW TO KEEP YOUR LIVER HEALTHY

- Reduce or eliminate your alcohol intake
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B
- Ask your healthcare professional to test you for hepatitis C antibodies
- Eat a well-balanced and lower fat diet
- Practice good sleeping habits
- Stay active and exercise regularly
- Manage your stress
- Learn and practice harm reduction — never share personal items
- Try to avoid environmental toxins
- Drink plenty of water; eight to ten 8-ounce glasses a day.