

What should people with HIV disease know about hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is curable with appropriate medications and can improve the overall immune system, but don't assume that your provider has tested you for hepatitis C - be sure to ask. People who are co-infected with HIV and HCV tend to progress to advanced liver disease faster than those with HIV or HCV mono-infection. Be sure to talk with your providers about medications and supplements that unknowingly may be harmful to the liver or have drug-drug interactions. As always, precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of both HIV and HCV.

Living with HIV and hepatitis C co-infection

Hepatitis C is a leading cause of death among people with HIV and therefore, HCV testing is paramount to overall health. With advances in medicine, many treatment options have made HIV a manageable, chronic condition. Hepatitis C is a curable disease. Patients with controlled HIV live long, healthy lives and see an overall improvement in their health upon curing HCV.

Why should people with HIV get tested for hepatitis C?

In the US, about a 1/3 of the people living with HIV also have hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is only spread through contact with contaminated blood and is 60 times more infectious than HIV. Since hepatitis and HIV have similar transmission routes, it is suggested that all people living with HIV receive hepatitis C antibody testing and vaccinations for hepatitis A and B.

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

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

www.CaringAmbassadors.org



People with HIV & HEPATITIS



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

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

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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.

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.

Natural Progression of Hepatitis C

