

What should African Americans know about hepatitis C?

African Americans are impacted disproportionately in nearly every major health area. For the hepatitis C virus (HCV), it is no different. African Americans comprise about 13 percent of the population but they represent 25 percent of all hepatitis C cases. Although the national rates of recent infections are no higher than in other racial or ethnic groups, long-term, or chronic hepatitis C rates are more common for African Americans.

- For African Americans born between 1945 – 1965, hepatitis C-related chronic liver disease is a leading cause of death.
- 1 in 10 African American men born between 1945 – 1965 are estimated to have hepatitis C. The majority are not diagnosed.
- In African Americans liver cancer and deaths from hepatitis C are nearly twice as common compared to whites or Anglo Americans.
- The majority of Veterans with HCV are men born between 1945 – 1965 living in urban areas, with African-American Veterans disproportionately affected.

Hepatitis C symptoms can be worsened by other conditions that disproportionately impact the African American community such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and HIV/AIDS. In turn, HCV can damage the liver to the point where medications for these conditions and illnesses will not work well. Therefore, curing the body from hepatitis C not only improves liver health, but the overall health of the individual.

Why should African Americans get tested for hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus found in the blood and primarily attacks the liver. Over time, the virus can lead to chronic diseases such as cirrhosis, liver cancer and even death, many of which can be avoided with treatment.

There is a cure for HCV. Until very recently, the overall cure rate was low. Historically, African Americans had the lowest cure rate compared to other racial or ethnic groups. Now, the cure rate is 90 to 95% for all racial and ethnic groups and the treatment has been drastically simplified with few side effects.

If you or someone you know has hepatitis C, discussing the new treatment is the start to preventing unnecessary suffering and avoidable deaths. If you have not been tested, please ask your healthcare provider about testing options at your next visit.

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



African Americans & HEPATITIS



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

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

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.

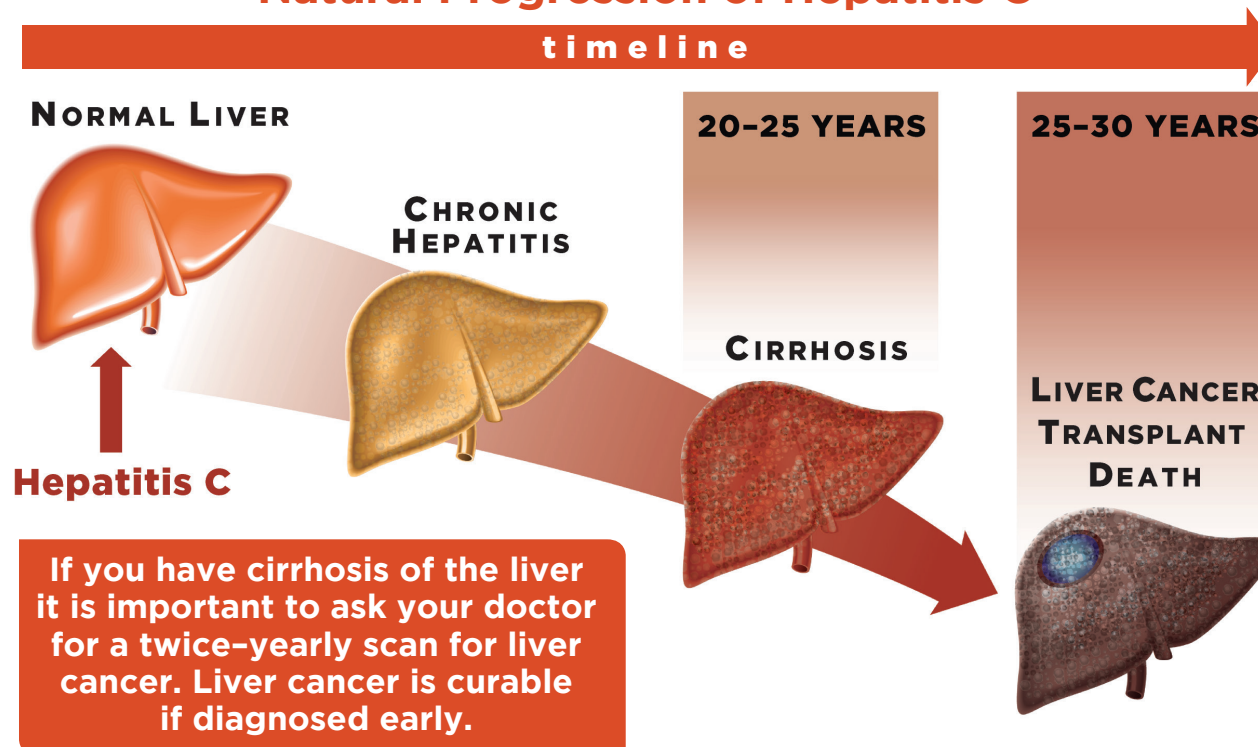


WHAT CAN HURT YOUR LIVER?

- 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.