

## What should Latinos know about hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is the most common chronic blood-borne virus in the United States, affecting an estimated 3.2 to 5 million people. 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.

Latinos are 15% more likely to have liver disease than non-Hispanic whites, or Anglo-Americans. Death rates among Latinos from liver disease, including those caused by hepatitis C, are almost twice the rates of African Americans and whites. An additional concern for Latinos is the high genetic risk for obesity and type 2 diabetes. Both contribute to nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) which increases the risk of developing cirrhosis or liver cancer.

National surveillance data on Latinos with HCV is scarce. Some data is available on hepatitis C frequency in Latin American Countries and U.S. Territories identifying Puerto Rico with the highest HCV prevalence rates, followed by Mexico. South America and Cuba have the lowest rates of HCV. A recent study identified that HCV infection may follow this same pattern within various Latino communities of the United States.

## Why should Latinos get tested for Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C has been called the “silent epidemic” because 75% of those who are infected are unaware, and it can take 20 years or more for someone to have noticeable symptoms. However, by that time severe liver damage may have already occurred. Before 1992, proper screening of the blood and tissue banks for HCV was not in place and therefore many Latinos were infected. A simple blood test can determine if you have hepatitis C.

There is a cure for hepatitis C. The earlier HCV is detected, the sooner treatment can be started and the more likely advanced liver disease can be avoided. Ask your healthcare provider about getting tested for HCV 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](http://www.CaringAmbassadors.org)



# Latinos & 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.

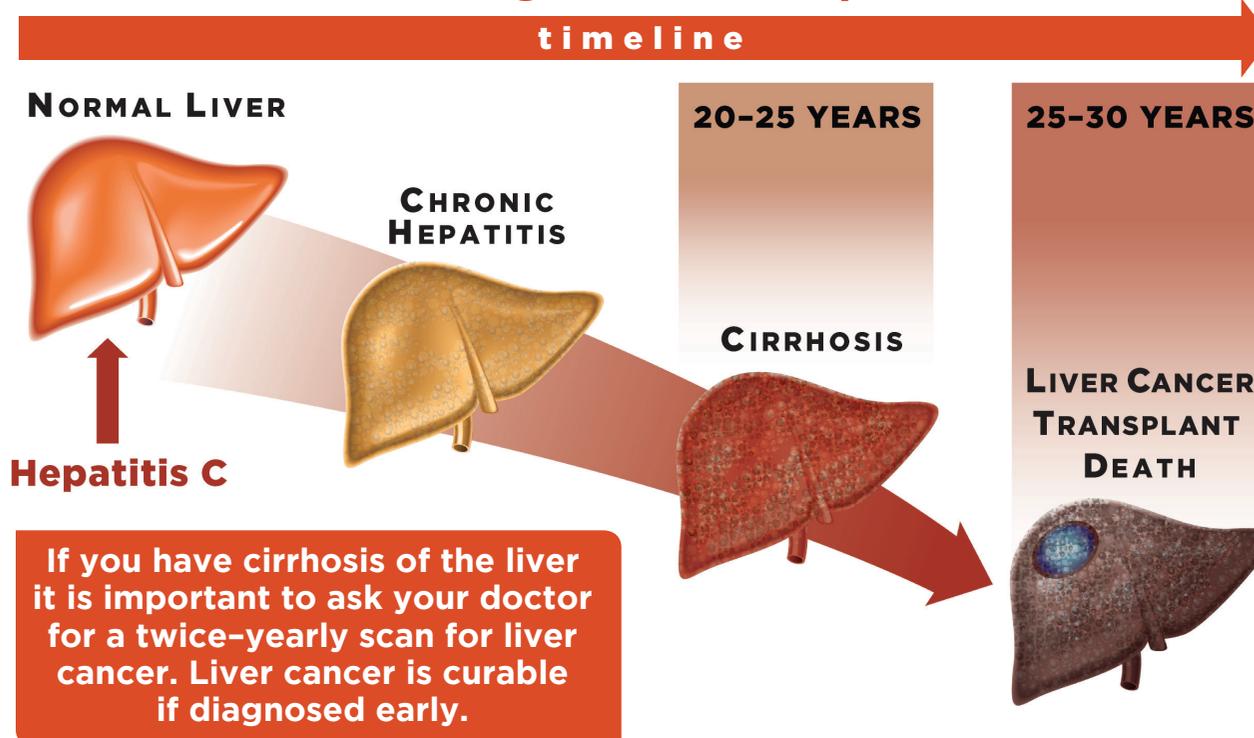


## WHAT CAN HURT YOUR LIVER?

- 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.