

HEPATITIS



C

Remember to Ask Your Doctor

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by infection with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). The virus is found in the blood of persons who have this disease and is spread by contact with infected blood.

You should be tested for hepatitis C...

- If you ever injected street drugs, even once many years ago.
- If you had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992.
- If you were treated for clotting problems with a blood product made before 1987.
- If you have ever been on long-term kidney dialysis.

Why is it important to be tested?

If you test positive for hepatitis C, it is very likely that you have chronic (long-term) liver disease. You need to see a doctor to

- Find out if you have liver disease and if you should be treated for it.
- Learn how you can protect your liver from further harm.
- Learn how you can prevent spreading HCV to others.

But I don't feel sick.

Many persons who have hepatitis C have no symptoms and feel healthy for many years. For some persons, the most common symptom is extreme tiredness. The only way to tell if you have been infected with HCV is to have an HCV blood test, which is not part of a routine physical.

How serious is it?

If your HCV test is positive, your doctor should test you for liver disease. Hepatitis C is serious for some persons, but not for others. Most persons who get hepatitis C carry the virus for the rest of their lives and will have some liver damage, but many do not feel sick. Some persons with liver damage due to hepatitis C may develop cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver and liver failure, which may take many years to develop.

Is there treatment?

Current antiviral medicines may get rid of the virus and reduce liver disease. If you have hepatitis C, check with your doctor to see if treatment can help.

If you have it, protect your liver!

- Don't drink alcohol.
- See your doctor regularly.
- Check with your doctor before starting new medicines, including over-the-counter and herbal medicines.
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A if you have liver disease.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HEPATITIS C:

Access our web site at
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

Or call the Hepatitis Information Line at
1-888-4HEP-CDC, 1-888-443-7232

Or write to
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Viral Hepatitis, Mailstop G37
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Ask Your Doctor if You or Your Loved Ones Should Be Tested for Hepatitis C.

