
Treating Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

It's likely that the hepatitis C virus (HCV) was found when you had routine liver tests on your blood, or after you donated blood. Once hepatitis C is found, you need to be checked for liver disease. This is often done with imaging such as an abdominal ultrasound and with blood work. You may also have a small liver sample (biopsy) taken. It can see if medicines may help.

Hepatitis C can be a short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic) illness. Acute hepatitis C is often treated with bed rest, fluids, a healthy diet, and not drinking alcohol. With new treatments, chronic hepatitis C can be cured in most people. But even after it is cured, you can still get it again.

Take these steps

To help keep your body strong and possibly ease symptoms:

- **Don't stress your liver.** Don't use alcohol or any unneeded medicines. Your healthcare provider may advise not taking or taking a lower dose of acetaminophen or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). Sometimes, you can still use these medicines safely. Always check with your healthcare provider first before taking any over-the-counter medicines or supplements.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** A diet low in fat, high in fiber, and full of fresh fruits and vegetables helps you stay healthy.
- **Stay at a healthy weight and control any other health problems.** You have a higher risk for a fatty liver if you are overweight or obese. That's also the case if you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes. A fatty liver can make HCV liver disease worse.
- **Take prescribed medicines.** Your provider will talk with you about the types of medicines that will work best for you. You may need to take medicines to treat hepatitis C for several months or more. Compared with past treatments, new medicines work very well at curing the disease. They have fewer side effects. They are also taken by mouth and for less time.

Follow up regularly

Hepatitis C can get worse and hurt your liver without you knowing it. It is vital that you follow up with your provider and healthcare team. They can keep track of your condition. They can tell you about any new research and types of treatment for hepatitis C.



How to prevent the spread of HCV

No vaccine or medicine can prevent the spread of HCV and hepatitis C. It's up to you to keep others safe.

- Cover all skin breaks and sores yourself. If you need help, the person treating you should wear latex gloves.
- Use condoms during sex.
- Don't donate blood, plasma, other body tissue, or sperm.
- Don't share needles, razors, toothbrushes, manicure tools, or other personal items.
- Hepatitis C can live on surfaces outside the body at room temperature for days. Clean any blood spills using 1 part household bleach with 10 parts water. Wear gloves when cleaning.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about joining a support group.