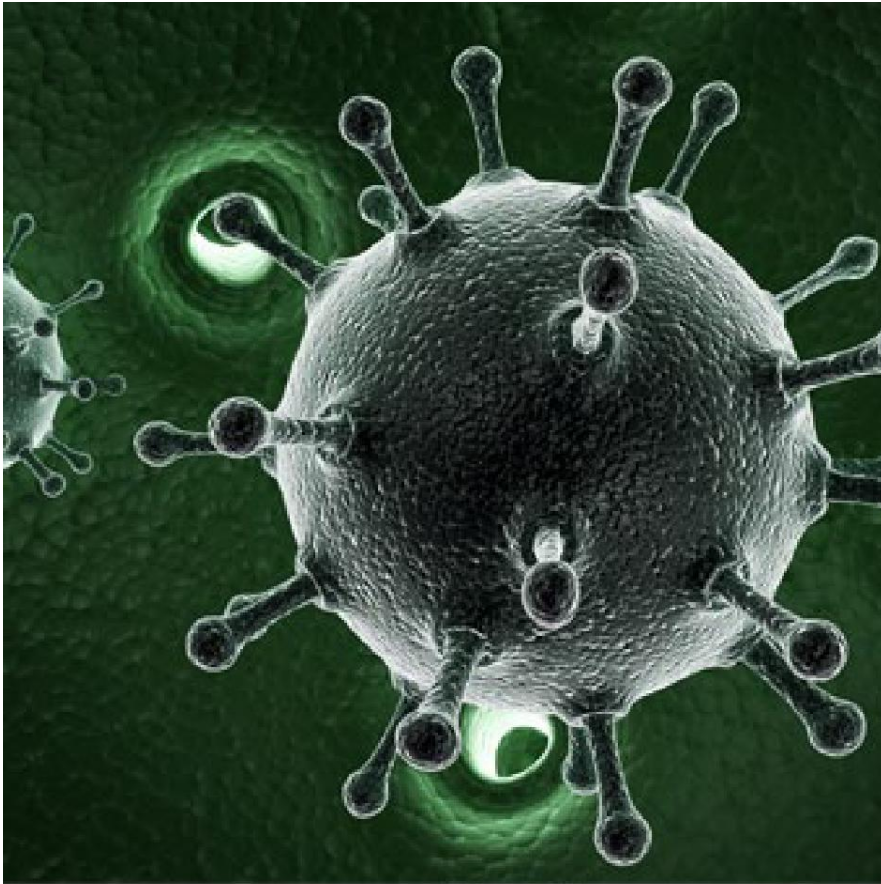




Hepatitis C (HCV)



Overview

This is a viral infection that affects the liver. It can cause you to be mildly sick for weeks or months. But even after you feel better, the virus can stay inside your body. It can slowly harm your liver over many years.

Causes

You can get the hepatitis C virus from an infected person's blood. This can happen when needles are shared between people. It can be passed by a piercing needle or a tattoo needle. A healthcare worker can get it from an accidental needle prick. It's possible for the virus to be passed through organ transplants and blood transfusions, but this is rare because of modern screening methods. The virus can be passed from a pregnant mother to her baby. In rare cases it has been passed from common household items that have been contaminated with blood, and it has been passed through sexual contact.

Symptoms

Most people who are infected won't notice any symptoms. If you do, you may feel like you have the flu. You may have fever, fatigue, nausea, and joint pain. These can be mild or severe. Even if you don't have symptoms, you can pass the virus to others. If the virus stays in your body for six months, you are said to have a chronic infection. This can last for the rest of your life. A chronic infection can cause serious liver problems. You may have liver damage, liver failure, or liver cancer. A chronic infection can be fatal.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the stage of your disease. In the early stage of infection, your body may be able to defeat the virus on its own. Or, medication may help you fight it. A chronic infection is also treated with medication. A liver transplant may help you, too, but in most cases after a transplant the infection will return. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that is right for you.

Actor portrayals in photos

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