



Hepatitis C: The STI Facts

What is Hep C?

Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a virus that affects the liver.

Hep C often has no symptoms. This means you won't know you have it unless you get a blood test. Even without symptoms, it can still be passed on to others. Symptoms can include aches and pains, fever, feeling sick (nausea), flu like illness, vomiting, dark wee (urine), tiredness (fatigue), yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice).

Without proper treatment, Hep C can cause long-term swelling of the liver. It can also develop into serious illnesses including liver failure, cancer and death.

How do you get Hep C?

Hep C can be passed on from person to person when the blood of someone with Hep C enters the bloodstream of another person. This can happen through:

- sharing used injecting equipment
- unsterile piercing and tattooing
- sharing toothbrushes, razors and sex toys that have body fluids on them
- needle stick injuries
- if blood from a person with Hep C comes into contact with an open wound of another person.

In some rare cases, Hep C can be passed on from:

- Hep C positive mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding
- during unprotected sex, if there is blood being swapped
- during medical and dental procedures, if standard safety precautions are not followed.

You cannot get Hep C from kissing, hugging, holding hands, coughing, sneezing, sharing food or drinks.

How can I prevent Hep C?

- Do not share injecting equipment, razor blades, toothbrushes and sex toys.
- Use sterile tattoo, acupuncture and body piercing equipment.
- Use condoms and dams during oral, vaginal or anal sex. Condoms can prevent Hep C from being passed on.

You can get sterile injecting equipment from your [local needle and syringe program](#). These are free, anonymous and confidential services. You can also get sterile injecting equipment from some pharmacies.

How do I test for Hep C?

Hep C is tested for by a blood or finger prick test. If you have been exposed to Hep C, it is important to get some advice and testing.

Hep C tests are easy, confidential and nothing to be ashamed about.



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How do you treat Hep C?

Hep C is treated using an antiviral medicine. The medicine is highly effective. Hep C tablets are taken daily for 8-12 weeks. With proper treatment, you can't spread Hep C to another person.

Even if Hep C is treated, you can still get it again. However, the good news is you can just get tested and treated again.

To prevent getting Hep C again, it is important to always use sterile equipment and not share injecting equipment, razors or toothbrushes. You should also use condoms and dams during oral, vaginal or anal sex.

Where can I find more information on Hep C and other STIs?

For information and support about Hep C, other STIs and your sexual health, you can call the [Sexual Health Infolink](#) on 1800 451 624 (free call) to speak to a specialist sexual health nurse. It's free, confidential, and non-judgemental. You can also call the [Hepatitis Infoline](#) on 1800 803 990 or visit the [International Student Health Hub](#).

If you would like an interpreter to help you access health services or information, please contact the [Translating and Interpreting Service](#) on 131 450.

Scan the QR code to find out more about Hep C and STIs

