

# Testing for Hepatitis C



## What Is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C virus (also called HCV) is a virus that affects the liver and sometimes other parts of the body. HCV can cause serious harm to your liver and may even lead to liver cancer. You can pass HCV on to other people, but many people who have HCV don't even know that they are infected. It's important to be screened for HCV if you are at risk because HCV is curable. Treatments cure more than 95% of patients, usually take 12 weeks or less, and have few side effects.



## What Are the Signs and Symptoms of HCV?

- Most people who are infected with HCV do not have symptoms.
- Some people may have body pain, joint pain, loss of appetite, yellow eyes or skin, or low energy.
- Some people get a rash.
- In rare cases, toxins build up in your body and affect your brain. This can cause confusion, slurred speech, or behavior changes.
- It can take years to feel sick after you're infected. Many people don't even know they have the virus. That's why it's important for you to be tested.



## Should I Be Tested for HCV?

You should be tested for HCV if you:

- Are an adult born between 1945 and 1965
- Are currently injecting or have ever injected drugs
- Have had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- Have HIV

You might need to be tested for HCV if you:

- Have ever had a tissue transplant
- Use cocaine or other noninjecting illegal drugs
- Have gotten tattoos or body piercings from an unlicensed person or place
- Have had multiple sex partners
- Have or had sex partner(s) who have HCV
- Have had STDs in the past

Talk with your healthcare professional about whether you should be tested for HCV.

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## How Will I Be Tested for HCV?

- Your healthcare professional will ask you about any symptoms you might have and will do a physical exam.
- You will also need a blood test.
- If you have an active infection, you might need more blood testing so that your healthcare professional can learn which type of HCV you have and how to best treat it.



## Where Can I Get Tested?

- Ask your healthcare professional if you should be tested for HCV. They might be able to do a blood test in their office. Or, they might send you to a lab to get blood drawn.
- If you don't have health insurance, many local health clinics and health departments test for HCV at a low cost or for free.
- Use the CDC's "Get Tested" website, <https://gettested.cdc.gov>, to find free and low-cost testing locations near you.



## Bottom Line

- HCV can damage your liver and can cause liver cancer.
- It is important to know if you have HCV because it can be cured.
- People with HCV often do not have any symptoms, so it's important to be screened if you are at risk.
- Testing for HCV includes a physical exam and a series of blood tests.
- Talk with your healthcare professional about whether you should be tested.



## Questions for My Doctor

- Should I be tested for HCV?
- Where can I be tested for HCV?
- Should my partner or family members be tested for HCV?
- What happens if I learn I have HCV?
- What are the symptoms of HCV?

## For More Information

- **American Liver Foundation:** <http://hepc.liverfoundation.org/diagnosis/who-should-get-tested/>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCGettingTested.pdf>
- **American Association for Clinical Chemistry:** <https://labtestsonline.org/tests/hepatitis-c-testing>