



# What is HCV ? HCV is the Hepatitis C Virus

## Is HCV serious?

It can be very serious. HCV can destroy the liver. Our livers perform over 500 important functions that keep us healthy and alive.

## How do people get infected?

HCV enters the body through infected blood. It is 10-15 times more infectious through blood than HIV. Some of the ways that people get infected are through:

- 1 Sharing equipment used for injecting, snorting or smoking drugs (particularly crack and crystal meth when the pipe is hot and people may have chapped lips), and sharing equipment to inject steroids by athletes.
- 2 Having received a blood transfusion, blood products or organ transplants before 1992.
- 3 Needlestick injuries or medical procedures if equipment hasn't been properly sterilized.
- 4 Getting tattoos, body piercings, electrolysis or acupuncture with non-sterile equipment.
- 5 Sharing personal use items such as razors, toothbrushes or nail care equipment.
- 6 Unprotected sexual activity (probably only if blood, an open sore or abrasion is present).
- 7 Being the baby of an HCV positive mom.

## Quick Facts about HCV in British Columbia and Canada

- 1 HCV is preventable, yet BC has an infection rate that's twice the national average. Every five hours another person in BC is infected, and often it's a young person.
- 2 Over 50,000 British Columbians have already been diagnosed. Another 15,000-20,000 may be infected but don't know they have it.
- 3 Many people do not have symptoms until extensive liver damage has occurred. Symptoms can include being very tired, yellow skin or eyes, fever, nausea or muscle and joint pain.
- 4 The costs of this epidemic are rising rapidly. HCV will soon cost Canadians one billion dollars every year. HCV is the number one reason for liver transplants in Canada.
- 5 HCV can be successfully treated, but at present, only 1% of HCV positive people are receiving treatment annually. There is much that can be done.

**IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE AT RISK, TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR OR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE ABOUT GETTING TESTED**



# FACT SHEET

## What can I do ?

Learn more at [www.bchepcouncil.ca](http://www.bchepcouncil.ca)

Get tested if you've been at risk

Treat blood with respect. Learn about, practice, and teach your children the 'Steps for Protection against Germs and Disease' (formerly called Standard Precautions). This information is available at <http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/httoc.stm#S>

Support your local HCV-focused community-based organization.

Tell your MLA, MP and Health Region that we need a properly resourced, coordinated and cost-effective plan to stop new infections, to improve treatment success rates and to help HCV positive people who don't benefit from treatment to stay as healthy as possible. By making your voice heard, you'll be reminding governments and health authorities that they can—and should—reduce the suffering, costs and instances of disability, liver failure, liver cancer and death.

**HCV is preventable. HCV is treatable.**

**We know what to do. All we need  
are the resources.**



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