

HCV: HEPATITIS C VIRUS



Hepatitis C is a virus that injures the liver.

The liver is a very important organ in your body. It helps the body fight infections, break down toxins (poisons) and drugs, digest food, and more. You can't live without it.

You can have hepatitis C and not know it.

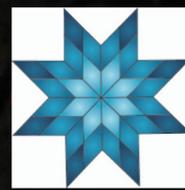
You can live with hepatitis C for 20 to 30 years or more without feeling sick even though the virus is injuring the liver. Over time, the injury to the liver gets worse, making it hard for this organ to work properly.

Testing is the only way to find out if you have hepatitis C.

It usually takes two blood tests to tell whether you have hepatitis C. The first test (an antibody test) checks to see if you have ever come in contact with the virus. The second test (a PCR or RNA test) checks to see if you have a hepatitis C infection right now.

How hepatitis C is passed from blood to blood.

The virus gets into the blood through breaks in the skin or in the lining of the nose and mouth. Hepatitis C is a strong virus: it can live outside of the body for many days. This means dried blood can also pass the virus.



Today Indigenous communities strive to work towards integration of the western biomedical health model and indigenous ways of knowing, a dual system that is grounded in the history, context and relevancy of the people.

66%

of people who inject drugs are antibody positive for HCV

3X

the average of new diagnosis among First Nations living on reserve

44%

of people with chronic HCV infection were unaware of their status

MAIN WAYS HCV ENTERS THE BODY

- Re-using single-use drug equipment that was used by someone else; this includes all supplies not only needles and syringes
- Re-using tools for piercing, tattooing; this includes needles, ink and ink pots.
- Re-using tools for electrolysis and acupuncture
- Re-using single-use medical equipment that was meant to be used only once
- Getting a blood transfusion or organ transplant that was not screened for Hepatitis C

NORTHREACH SEEKS TO:

- Increase knowledge of HCV, centering on identifying needs to promote health and well-being, as it relates to the prevention and management of HCV.
- Increase awareness and reduce stigma related to HCV, through the promotion of testing, prevention strategies, harm reduction, care and management, including supportive environments for those at risk.
- Improved access to care, treatment, and support for community members with or at high risk of being exposed to HCV.
- Improved coordination of prevention, harm reduction, educational opportunities, treatment and resources within the community