

Stages of liver damage

Without treatment, damage to the liver gets worse over time.

These are the stages of liver damage:

Inflammation. Infected liver cells become damaged and some cells die. This causes the liver to swell.



Fibrosis. Over time, scars may form on the liver. This is called fibrosis.



Cirrhosis. As fibrosis increases over many years, the liver can harden and shrink. This is an advanced form of liver disease called cirrhosis.



Liver cancer or liver failure. After a long period of time, people may get liver cancer or the liver can stop working (called liver failure).

There is treatment for Hep C

The main goal of Hep C treatment is to clear the Hep C virus from the body.

The decision to take Hep C treatment is a big one but for many people it's a decision that does not have to be made right away.

Learning about your treatment options will help you make choices that are right for you.

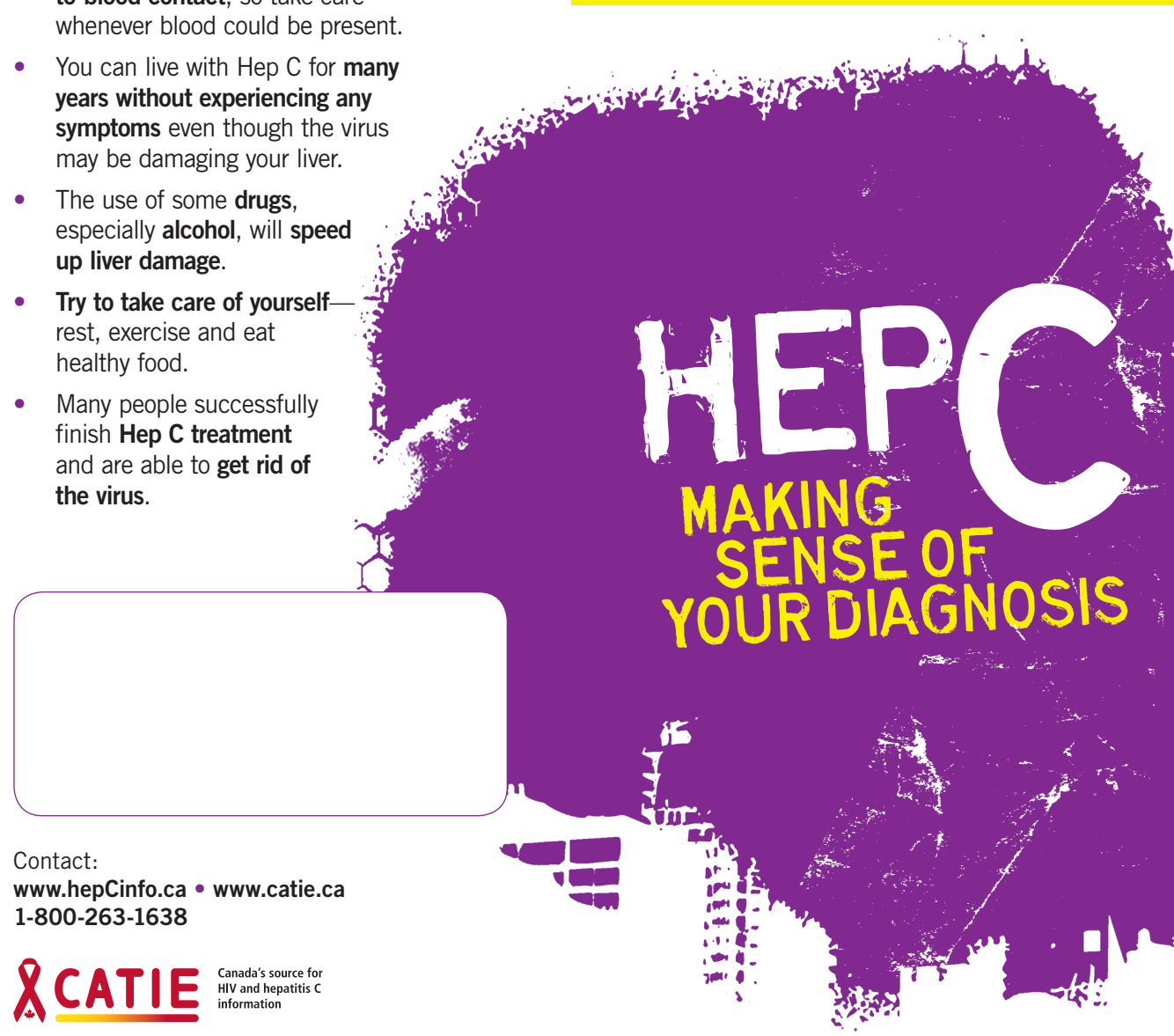
A nurse or doctor can answer different questions you may have, such as:

- How healthy is my liver? Do I need treatment right now?
- What does treatment involve?
- How well does treatment work?

Points to remember:

- Hep C is spread through **blood-to-blood contact**, so take care whenever blood could be present.
- You can live with Hep C for **many years without experiencing any symptoms** even though the virus may be damaging your liver.
- The use of some **drugs**, especially **alcohol**, will **speed up liver damage**.
- **Try to take care of yourself**—rest, exercise and eat healthy food.
- Many people successfully finish **Hep C treatment** and are able to **get rid of the virus**.

Hepatitis C: Newly Diagnosed



Contact:
www.hepCinfo.ca • www.catie.ca
1-800-263-1638



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So you've found out you have hepatitis C...

Knowing you have Hep C can help you to take charge and make decisions about your health.

There is treatment for Hep C, and it's getting better all the time—more and more people are finishing treatment and getting rid of the virus.

There are also people and services out there that can help you understand Hep C, stay healthy and protect others.

Did you get the right tests?

It takes two blood tests to know that you have Hep C—one to see if you have been exposed to the virus (an antibody test) and one to check for active infection (a viral load, PCR or RNA test).

What is Hep C?

Hep C is a liver disease caused by the Hep C virus.

The liver is an important organ in your body. It:

- fights infections, cleans toxins (poisons) from the blood, digests food and more
- is on the right side of the body, under the ribs, and is about the size of a football

Over many years and without treatment, Hep C can cause a lot of damage to your liver and you can become very sick.

Taking steps to stay healthy can help prevent liver damage.

Ways to stay healthy

Here are some of the different steps you can take to stay healthy with Hep C:

- **Take good care of your liver** by eating well, exercising and resting. Cutting back on or avoiding things that can be hard on the liver, such as alcohol and cigarettes, helps too.
- **Protect yourself from other viruses.** Infection with more than one virus is called co-infection and it can make liver damage from Hep C worse. Learn about the ways that other viruses—such as Hep A, Hep B and HIV—are spread. You can also get a vaccine to prevent Hep A and Hep B. There is no vaccine to prevent HIV.
- **Think about who to tell.** You might want to tell people you can trust that you have Hep C so they can support you. You might also tell others so they can get tested too.
- **Get financial help.** There are programs that can help you cover the costs of living if your symptoms or treatment side effects make it difficult for you to work. There are also programs that can help you cover the costs of treatment.

If you have any questions or want help, you can talk to a nurse, doctor, counsellor or community worker, join a support group or contact a hepatitis C service organization. Many HIV service organizations also provide support to people living with Hep C.

Thinking about having a baby? It is rare for Hep C to be passed from a woman to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth. For more information, talk to a nurse or doctor.

Tests: Keeping track of your Hep C

There are different tests that can tell you the type of Hep C you have, track how Hep C is affecting you, and help you make decisions about treatment.

- It is important to see a nurse or doctor to find out about tests that can help you keep track of your Hep C.
- Every person is different, so the tests you have and how often you have them will be unique to you.

These tests include:

- **Hep C genotype testing:** There are six different types of Hep C called “genotypes.” Knowing the genotype of your virus is important because some genotypes respond better to treatment than others. A blood test can tell you the genotype you have.
- **Liver function tests:** These blood tests can tell you how well your liver is working.
- **Biopsy:** This test uses a needle to take out a very tiny sample of the liver. The sample shows how much liver damage there is.
- **Ultrasound:** An ultrasound takes a picture of your liver to see how much liver damage there is.

GET THE
FULL PICTURE.
GET THE RIGHT
LIVER TESTS.

HEPC

Help protect the people in your life: Prevent the spread of Hep C

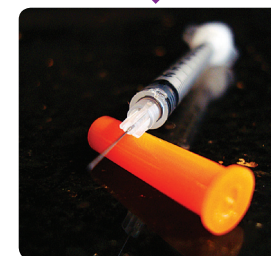
Hep C is spread through **blood-to-blood contact**.

- If you have Hep C and your blood gets into the bloodstream of another person, they can get Hep C, too.
- Hep C is a strong virus and can live outside of the body for many days. This means that dried blood can also pass the virus.
- Don't worry about activities such as hugging, kissing, shaking hands, sharing toilets or sharing cutlery. These are completely safe because they don't involve blood-to-blood contact.

Basic ways to prevent the spread of Hep C are:

- **Having your own personal care items** that might have blood on them—such as toothbrushes, razors and nail clippers—and not sharing them with other people.
- Using bandages to **cover cuts and sores**.
- **Cleaning up blood spills carefully** by using 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Wear gloves and get rid of rags and gloves in a bag you can tie up.
- **Not sharing equipment for piercing or tattooing**—including needles, ink and inkpots—with other people.
- **Using your own drug equipment and not sharing it with other people.** This includes needles, syringes, filters, cookers, acidifiers, alcohol swabs, tourniquets, water, pipes for smoking crack and crystal meth, and straws for snorting.
- **Using a condom, glove or dental dam (a thin, square piece of rubber) during sex,** especially when there could be blood (such as during anal sex, rough sex or sex when a woman has her period).

You have yours



I have mine

