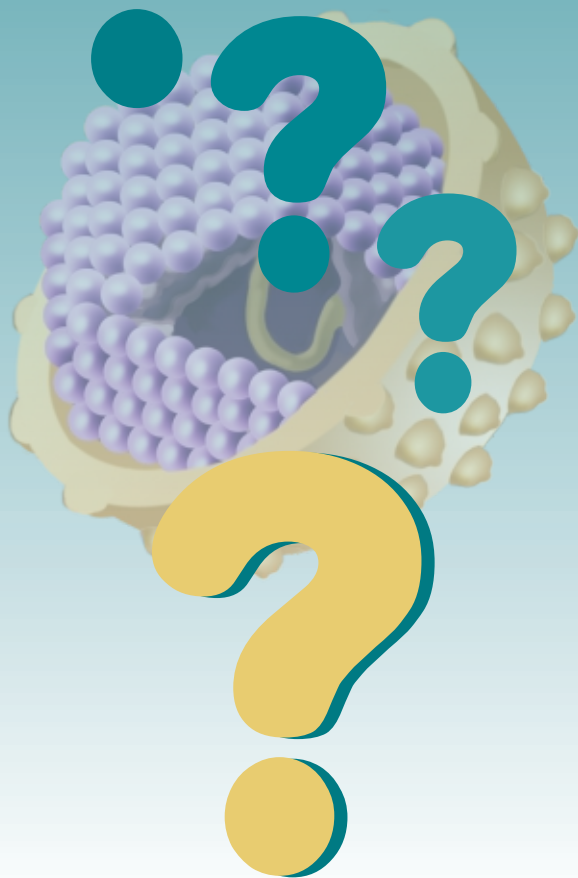
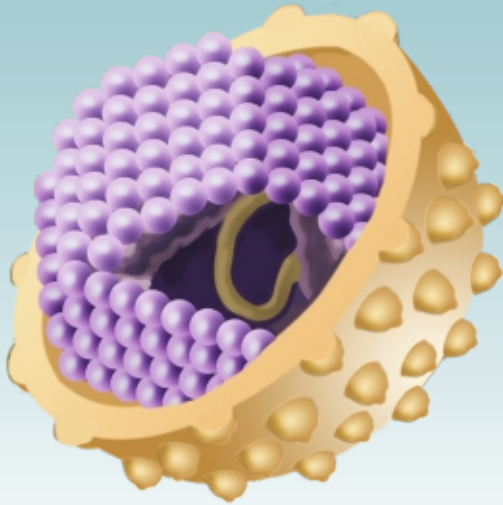


# Frequently Asked Questions about Hepatitis C



# What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (or hep C) is a virus that can cause damage to the liver.



# How is hepatitis C spread?



The hep C virus is spread when there is **blood-to-blood** contact between someone with hep C and a person without hep C. This happens most often by:

- sharing injection equipment such as needles and syringes
- accidentally being poked with a used needle
- sharing drug snorting equipment

# Are there symptoms from hepatitis C?



Initially, most people will have no or few symptoms, but...

# ...over time some develop symptoms such as

- feeling tired
- muscle pain
- joint pain
- headaches
- itchy skin

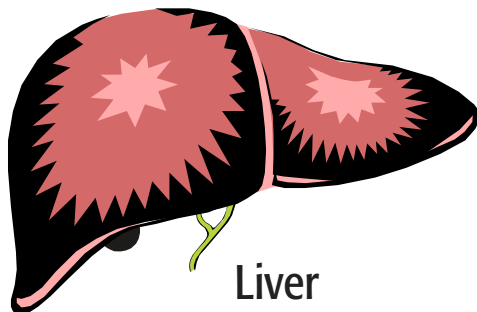


- abdominal pain
- depression
- anxiety
- "brain fog"

# Is hepatitis C a death sentence?

No. Most people who get hep C do not die from it. But, over a long period of time, some will develop:

- cirrhosis
- liver cancer
- or may need a liver transplant

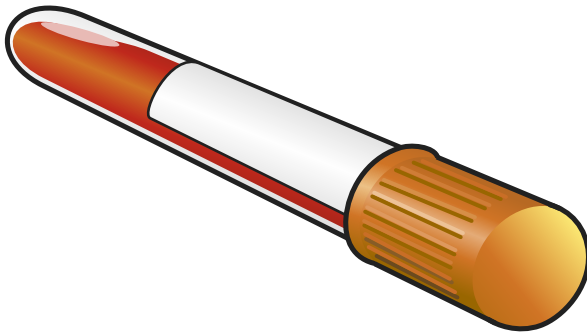


# Do people with hep C need to see a provider even if they feel fine?



Yes, every 6 to 12 months! Even if a person feels well and has no symptoms, hep C can still be damaging their liver.

# When do providers order a hepatitis C viral load test?



Providers will measure viral load when they need to:

- diagnose a hepatitis C infection
- monitor treatment response



# Do 'normal' ALT levels mean a normal liver, or no liver damage?



Yes and no.

It is common for ALT levels to go up and down. Sometimes normal levels occur when the liver is damaged.

# Since it is possible to have liver damage even if ALT levels are normal...

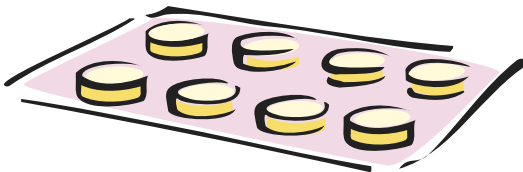
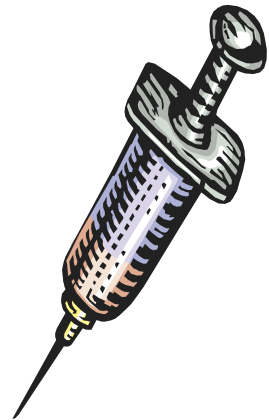


... health care providers will recommend a fibroscan or liver biopsy to check for liver damage.

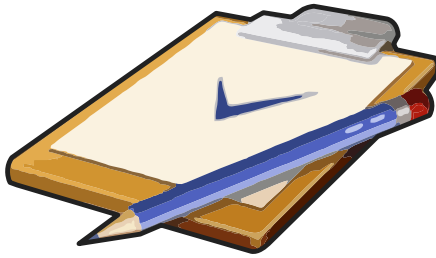
# Are there any effective medical treatments for hepatitis C?



Yes! Anti-viral medications can cure about **70%** of those treated.



# Can people who are using illicit drugs get treatment?

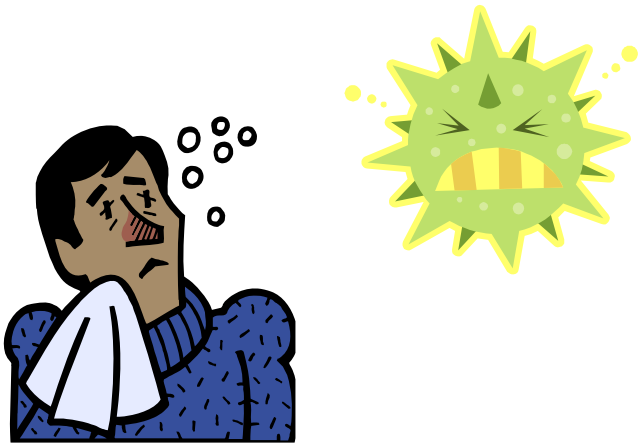


Yes! But they should ask to be referred to a provider who has experience working with people who have addictions.



These providers will work with the person to discuss and develop a plan to help them fit treatment into their life.

# Are there side effects from hepatitis C antiviral treatment?



Yes! Symptoms vary, but may include flu-like symptoms, difficulty sleeping, and extreme tiredness. It is important to talk with your health care provider about how to manage treatment side effects.



Most people who get treatment will need support from health care providers, family, friends, and peers throughout treatment.

For more information, visit [hepatitiseducation.ca](http://hepatitiseducation.ca) or [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca) and type "**Attendance Project**" in the search box.

This resource was created by the Attendance for Hepatitis C Care Project team ([info@hepatitiseducation.ca](mailto:info@hepatitiseducation.ca)). It would not have been possible without the valuable contributions from individuals affected by hepatitis C and service providers across Canada, support from the University of British Columbia and the BC Centre for Disease Control, and funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.



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