

Resources

Butte County Public Health
www.buttecounty.net/publichealth

CDC Viral Hepatitis Branch
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm

Hepatitis C Support Project
www.hcvadvocate.org

Medline Plus
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hepatitisc.html

American Liver Foundation
www.liverfoundation.org

VA Hepatitis C Program
www.hepatitis.va.gov



Butte County Public Health
202 Mira Loma Drive
Oroville, CA 95965
Phone: 530-538-7581

Hepatitis C



*Information and Resource
Guide for Butte County*

2011

Get Involved!

The **Butte County Hepatitis C Task Force** promotes awareness, advocacy and action for hepatitis C prevention and treatment in Butte County.

According to public health officials, 2% of the population may be infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). That means about 4,000 Butte County residents may be infected!

Join health care professionals, people living with HCV, public health staff, and concerned members of the community in responding to the problem of hepatitis C.

For the next meeting date call:
(530) 538-7044
or toll-free
1-877-783-4636

The information in this booklet is designed to help you understand and manage hepatitis C and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with hepatitis C should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment.

Education/Support Groups

The Oroville and Chico Family Health Centers offer Hepatitis C support groups. The support groups are free and open to the public. Family and friends of Hepatitis C patients are encouraged to come.

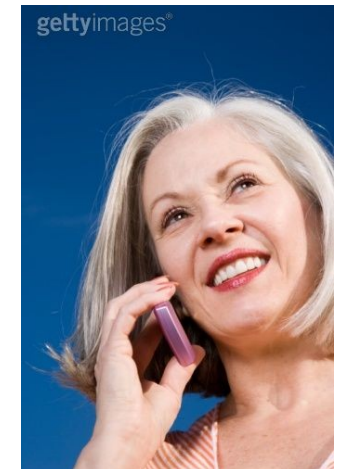
Dates and Times Vary

For info call:
Jeanette Warner
(530) 566-7513

The Chico Family Health Center offers a Hepatitis C Patient Education Class for those patients starting or considering treatment. Topics addressed include:

- Hepatitis C general overview and its effects on the body
- Discuss and learn to manage side effects of treatment
- Learn how to administer your medication
- Learn about other support programs available to help you improve your quality of life during therapy.

**These classes are free
and open to the public.
For information call
342-4395**



Treating Physicians

Abdullah Al-Dwairi, M.D.
Oroville Family Health Center
2800 Lincoln Blvd., Oroville
530-534-7500
Chico Family Health Center
680 Cohasset Road, Chico
530-342-4395

Donald Mansell M.D.
153 Pearson Road, Paradise 95969
530-877-0400
111 Raley Bl., Ste. #120, Chico 95928
530-895-8600

Stephen Pearce, M.D.
Richard Zak, M.D.
Uzma Abbasi, M.D.
Shaheen Rasheed, M.D.
251 Cohasset, Ste. 300, Chico
530-894-8800
By physician referral only.

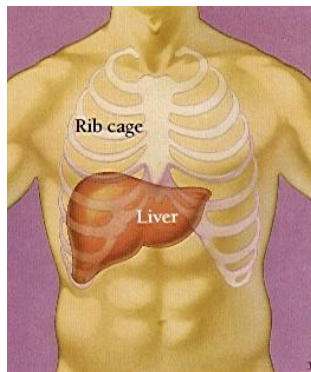
Nathanial Howard
2721 Olive Highway, Oroville
530-538-3171
Available by referral only.



Immunizations

To protect your liver you may need to be vaccinated against certain diseases including Hep A, Hep B, pneumonia, and influenza. Talk to a health care provider about which vaccines you may need.

What is hepatitis?



Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. When the liver is inflamed for a long time it can cause damage called cirrhosis or scarring of the liver. This damage interferes with proper liver function. The liver is a vital organ in your body. It cleans the blood of wastes and poisons, stores energy, and helps to keep you from becoming sick. You cannot survive without a liver.

There are several types of hepatitis viruses:

Hepatitis A

- Hepatitis A is passed through water or food contaminated with feces containing the virus.
- People may feel sick (vomiting, fever, and stomach ache) and they may have yellow skin and dark urine.
- Treatment is rest and fluids.
- There is a vaccine.

Hepatitis B

- Hepatitis B is passed through contact with infected blood or sex fluids including vaginal fluid and semen. It can also be passed from mother to baby at birth.
- People may feel like they have the flu, their joints may ache, and they may have dark urine, yellow skin, fever and light stool.
- There are treatments available, although they do not work for everyone.
- There is a vaccine and everyone should be immunized unless they have already had hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C

- The next few pages have information about hepatitis C.
- There is no vaccine at this time.

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is one of the viruses that damage the liver. HCV is blood-borne, which means that the virus is spread by infected blood that enters the body through the eyes, nose, mouth, or breaks in the skin. The virus may take a long time to damage the liver, sometimes between 20 and 30 years. Most people infected with HCV live with it for the rest of their lives.

How do you get hepatitis C?

HCV is passed through blood. People may have been infected with HCV through:

- **Lifestyle** Injection drug use, steroids, tattoos or piercing . . . things that involve blood or needle exposure.
- **Medical** A blood transfusion before 1992 or any blood products before 1992, or even an organ transplant before 1992.*
- **Exposure** Anything that may have had contaminated blood on it, such as needles, drug paraphernalia, toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers, etc.
- **Sex** Especially where there is blood. The more sex partners, the greater the risk of getting HCV. Transmission risk is usually low, but you should talk to a healthcare provider. **
- **Childbirth** A small number of babies born to mothers with HCV will get the virus from their mothers.

* Since 1992 all blood, blood products, and organs are tested for HCV.

** The information in this booklet is for educational purposes only and should not replace medical advice.

Nutrition

Everything you eat goes through your liver. Make sure you are eating the best foods to keep your liver healthy. If you have cirrhosis of the liver then you will need to talk to your doctor about your diet. Changing what you eat is a process that takes time. Start with a few of the suggestions here. For more information, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietician.

- Do not drink alcohol! Beer, wine, hard liquor and other alcohol are poison to your liver.
- Try to drink at least 8 glasses of water a day.
- Eat several small meals a day. Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Eat as many fresh fruits and vegetables as you can. At least 3 vegetables and 2 fruits each day is best.
- Eat whole grain products. Processed foods like white bread do not have many nutrients. Instead try whole wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice, etc.
- Limit caffeine. You may need to do this slowly or you might have withdrawal symptoms.
- Limit animal protein. Instead, get your protein from foods like beans, tofu (bean curd), lentils and nuts.



Everyone can benefit from these suggestions, even those without HCV.

Some Suggestions if you Test Positive

It can take decades for HCV to damage the liver. What you do today will effect you and your liver in the years to come. Here are some ways to take good care of yourself.

- Learn as much as you can about HCV.
- Join a support group. You don't have to go through this alone. Support groups are a great way to get up-to-date information, guidance and understanding.
- Be nice to your liver. Everything that enters your body whether eaten, breathed, injected, or absorbed through the skin, will go through your liver.
- Don't abuse drugs.
- Do not drink alcohol! Beer, wine, hard liquor and other alcohol will only damage your liver more.
- Don't smoke. Smoking damages more than you lungs.
- Rest. Be nice to your body and mind.
- Talk to your doctor before you take any vitamins, supplements, medications, including the type that you buy over the counter, such as cold medicine, Tylenol, herbal remedies, etc.
- If you haven't ever been, get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B.
- Enjoy life. Having HCV is serious, but it is not the end.
- Ask for help if you need it. There are many people ready to help you.
- Get regular check ups. It is important to see how your liver is doing.



What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?

Many people do not know they have hepatitis C because they don't have any symptoms. If they occur, symptoms can include:

- Constant fatigue
- Vomiting
- Lack of appetite
- Fever
- Headache
- Stomach ache
- Yellow skin and eyes
- Dark yellow urine
- Light colored stool
- Muscle/joint pain
- Itchy skin
- "Brain fog"

How can I be tested for hepatitis C?

There is a test to check for hepatitis C antibodies in the blood. The test cannot determine when or how you were infected. If you have a positive antibody test, you will need more tests to find out if the virus is still present and how your liver is doing.

Make an appointment with your regular doctor for a hepatitis C test. Testing is covered under most health insurance plans, including Medi-Cal and Medicare. If you do not have health insurance, low-cost testing is available at Butte County Public Health clinics.

If you test positive:

There are other tests that can help you find out how well your liver is working.

Viral Load Test measures the amount of virus in your blood. This can help determine if you still have hepatitis C and measure how well treatment is working.

Liver Function Tests are common blood tests that measure how well your liver is working

Liver Biopsy measures the amount of inflammation and scarring and the general health of your liver.

Can I give my partner or family HCV?

There must be contact with blood to pass the hepatitis C virus to others. If there is contact with blood during sex, the virus can be transmitted. Long term monogamous couples seem to be at less risk of passing the virus to each other. Talk to your health care provider to better understand your risk of transmitting the virus.



HCV is not spread by:

- Sneezing
- Hugging or kissing
- Coughing
- Food or water
- Sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses
- Casual contact

How can I protect others?

Do not share anything that might have blood on it.

- Needles or syringes
- Other drug works
- Razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes
- Cover any cuts or sores you have with a bandage.
- Put anything with blood on it in a plastic bag before you throw it away.
- Clean up blood using 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.
- Do not donate blood, organs, or sperm.
- Use condoms. Inform your partners.
- Breast feeding is okay if the nipples are not cracked or bleeding.
- 5 in 100 babies born to mothers with HCV will contract the virus. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant, or you plan on becoming pregnant

Is there treatment for hepatitis C?

- Treatment starts with you. You can play a big part in getting well.
- If your liver is found to have cirrhosis (scarring) then you may need treatment.
- There are a few drugs available to treat HCV, and more drugs are being developed.
- Many people do not need medical treatment.
- People with HCV should discuss treatment with their doctor.

Will I get better?

- Most people will have the virus for the rest of their lives.
- Many people live 10 to 30 years without any symptoms or problems, but the virus is damaging the liver during this time. People who take steps to protect their liver live a longer healthier life.
- The less damage to your liver, the healthier you will be, so take care of your liver.
- Some people do clear their body of the virus.
- Talk to a health care provider about what you can do to protect your liver.



Follow as many of the suggestions in this book as you can.