

## **Hepatitis C Frequently Asked Questions**

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### **Q. What is hepatitis C (HCV)?**

A. Hepatitis C is the name of a virus that replicates in the liver. One of the most common causes of liver disease, HCV has affected more than 4 million people in the United States.

### **Q. How do people get HCV?**

A. HCV is a blood-borne disease. The virus is spread when infected blood from one person enters the body of another. People who received blood transfusions, blood products, or organ transplants prior to 1992 are at risk (the blood supply in the US has been safe since 1992). The people who get HCV today are mostly those who share IV drug needles, but any exposure to blood carries some risk.

### **Q. How can people avoid getting HCV?**

A. Do not share IV drug paraphernalia. Do not share razors, toothbrushes or pedicure equipment such as files or nail clippers. Do not share body piercing equipment or jewelry. Have tattoos or piercing at professional businesses only. Practice safer sex.

### **Q. What is the course of the disease?**

A. Up to 25% of people who get HCV get over it and will not be contagious. Those who develop chronic HCV have varied outcomes. Up to 30% of those infected will develop cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver. Only about 2% of those with chronic HCV will go to “end stage liver disease” and need a liver transplant. Children and women generally have better outcomes than chronically infected men.

### **Q. How can I live successfully with HCV?**

A. Do not drink alcohol. Experts agree that not drinking alcohol is the number one way to slow progression with HCV. Eat a balanced diet, exercise as tolerated, and get plenty of rest. See a health care provider to determine if treatment is appropriate for you. Use only those drugs/herbs/vitamins prescribed by your doctor. Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B.