

# **HEPATITIS C NEWS**



***Get Tested  
Get Treated***

***ACT NOW!***

**NHS**

This content is used for illustrative purposes only.

## So what is hep C?

Hep C is a short way of saying hepatitis C. Hep C is a virus. Its main purpose is to reproduce or make copies of itself, and it needs some of the cells in your body to do this. The cells that hep C likes are found in your liver. This is why hep C causes damage to the liver.

## So how do I catch hep C?

Hep C is a blood borne virus. This means that your blood needs to come into contact with blood from another person who is infected with the virus. You can catch hep C in a number of ways:

- Sharing or reusing needles, syringes, spoons, filters or water
- Sharing of drug snorting equipment  
Sharing crack pipes.
- Tattooing and body piercing
- Blood transfusions prior to 1992.

## Is everyone around me at risk?

The simple answer is no. People around you are only at risk if their blood comes into contact with your blood. This is not as easy as it may sound. As long as you are not sharing drug, piercing or tattooing equipment the risk to others is extremely low. Some precautions might be keeping toothbrushes and razors separate from family or friends, and being careful to mop up blood spills.

## You can't catch Hep C,

- **Hugging**
- **Kissing**
- **Sharing cutlery**
- **Shaking hands**

These will not transmit the virus.

## Testing for hep C

The following two tests are required for hep C.

### Antibody test

This is the test that we will be doing at your pharmacy today. If you have ever come into contact with the virus, your body will try to fight the infection by producing antibodies. If antibodies are detected in this test then a second, more advanced test will be performed.

### PCR (RNA) test

This will test for the presence of ACTUAL virus in you. It is important to remember that approximately 20% of people who come into contact with hep C will clear it naturally within the first six months. This means they will always test positive for antibodies but will not test positive in the PCR (RNA) test.

## Treatment – Can I get rid of hep C?

Yes you can! The new treatments that are available on the NHS cure hep C in almost everyone who takes them and they are very easy to take!

## Isn't treatment horrible to take?

No. Not anymore! The new treatments do not contain interferon. The new treatment just consists of pills (no injections!) and is now much shorter, only lasting 8-12 weeks.

## But will the NHS treat me?

Yes. The NHS wants to cure as many people as possible because the government has agreed to eliminate hep C in the UK by **2030** at the latest. Treatment is available wherever you are. However, not all treatment services run perfectly so if you are having trouble getting treatment please call The Hepatitis C Trust's national helpline - details at the back of this booklet.

Use this space for support services that may be local to you

**Call 020 7089 6221**  
**or email [helpline@hepctrust.org.uk](mailto:helpline@hepctrust.org.uk)**  
**[www.hepctrust.org.uk](http://www.hepctrust.org.uk)**

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