

## ANSWER THIS HEPATITIS C RISK QUESTIONNAIRE

Take a minute to answer the following questions. If you answer yes to one or more, be sure to tell your doctor.

1. *Did you have a blood transfusion before 1992, including blood received during a cesarean section?*
2. *Have you ever undergone hemodialysis (treatment with kidney machine)?*
3. *Have you ever had your ears or other body part pierced (using contaminated equipment)?*
4. *Have you ever had contact with blood in the workplace or military?*
5. *Have you gotten a tattoo (using contaminated needles/ink)?*
6. *Have you tried IV drugs, even just once?*
7. *Have you snorted cocaine or other drugs (from a shared straw or bill)?*
8. *Have you ever shared a razor, toothbrush, or any item that could carry infected blood?*
9. *Have you ever had unprotected sex with multiple partners?*

## FACTS ABOUT HEPATITIS C



**"Our country is facing a silent epidemic in the form of hepatitis C...An estimated 4 million Americans have been infected with HCV, and a majority of them probably are not aware that they are infected."**

*— Excerpt from a letter by  
Dr. David Satcher,  
Surgeon General of the United States*

## **4 MILLION REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO LEARN ABOUT HEPATITIS C**

Approximately 4 million Americans of all ages and races are infected with the hepatitis C virus. That translates to 4 times the number of people infected with the AIDS virus. Every year, 8 to 10 thousand people die from hepatitis C-related complications. Hepatitis C has been called the "silent disease," because people can have the virus for years—even decades, without showing any outward symptoms, and can unknowingly pass the virus to others.

*Many can be at risk.* In fact, the threat of hepatitis C is so serious that the Surgeon General has issued a warning letter outlining the risk factors and stressing the importance of getting tested.



*This booklet can help you find out more about hepatitis C, as well as hepatitis A and B. You'll learn what hepatitis is, what the risk factors are, and what to do if you think you're at risk. Reading it could make a big difference in your life—or the life of someone you care about.*

## **WHAT IS HEPATITIS?**

Hepatitis is defined as "an inflammation of the liver." Viral hepatitis refers to several common diseases caused by viruses that can lead to swelling and tenderness of the liver. Exposure to chemicals and toxins can also cause hepatitis.

The most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Hepatitis B and C are the forms that can lead to serious, permanent liver damage, including cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure—which may require a transplant.

## WHAT DOES YOUR LIVER DO?

Your liver is the largest and one of the most important internal organs in your body. You can't live without it. It takes part in almost every vital process in your body.

### A few of your liver's functions are:

- Filtering out poisons and toxins. This includes alcohol and medications. Your liver turns these substances into harmless chemicals that your body can handle.
- Turning food into nutrients your body can use. It also distributes these nutrients to your blood cells.
- Storing carbohydrates. In addition to distributing nutrients, your liver stores carbohydrates that your body uses when you need quick energy.
- Building proteins. Your liver takes simpler substances and turns them into proteins that your body needs to clot blood, make new cells, and create necessary chemical reactions inside cells.

*Because of the liver's crucial role in the body, liver diseases such as hepatitis C can be very serious.*

## DO YOU KNOW THE A B C'S OF HEPATITIS?

Hepatitis C is only one form of hepatitis. Other forms of the disease are caused by different viruses and are spread in different ways. It is important to know the differences among hepatitis A, B, and C—the three common types of hepatitis. The chart on the next page lists some of the key differences among hepatitis A, B, and C.

## COMMON ROUTES OF TRANSMISSION OF VIRAL HEPATITIS:

	A	B	C
<i>Food or water</i>	X	–	–
<i>Blood transfusion</i>	o	Δ	X*
<i>Organ transplant</i>	–	o	o
<i>Hemodialysis</i>	–	Δ	Δ
<i>Sexual intercourse (vaginal)</i>	–	X	o
<i>Anal/oral sex</i>	X	X	o
<i>Mother to child at birth</i>	–	X	o
<i>Casual household contact between family members</i>	X	o	o
<i>Injection drug use (shared needles)</i>	o	X	X
<i>Body piercing/tattooing (contaminated needles/ink)</i>	–	o	o
<i>Needlestick injuries</i>	–	Δ	o
<i>Occupations involving exposure to blood (eg, emergency service workers)</i>	–	o	Δ
<i>Within certain institutions:</i>			
<i>Day care</i>	Δ	o	–
<i>Prison</i>	o	Δ	X

X = frequent

Δ = common

o = uncommon/rare

– = not applicable

\* = before 1992

—Adapted from the American Liver Foundation

## **WHAT IS HEPATITIS A (HAV)?**

Hepatitis A is a form of hepatitis that is spread through food or water that has been contaminated with human feces. It can make you feel as though you have a particularly bad case of the flu, with symptoms of fatigue and nausea with vomiting, fever, joint/muscle pain, loss of appetite, as well as abdominal pain. Medical treatment is not needed to eliminate the virus. However, doctors may prescribe medicine to treat the “flu-like” symptoms, or may give patients IV fluids to prevent dehydration. Patients generally can clear this virus from their body in 3 to 4 months without long-term liver damage. A vaccine is available for the prevention of hepatitis A.

## **WHAT IS HEPATITIS B (HBV)?**

The hepatitis B virus can cause serious liver problems. It is spread through contact with infected blood, as well as semen and saliva. There are over a million people in the United States with hepatitis B. Some people with hepatitis B have no outward signs or symptoms, while others experience “flu-like” symptoms. Most adults can fight off hepatitis B without treatment. But in about 10% of patients, a chronic form (lasting more than 6 months) can develop and, left untreated, it can lead to serious liver disease. A vaccine is available for the prevention of hepatitis B.



## **WHAT IS HEPATITIS C (HCV)?**

The hepatitis C virus is spread by contact with infected human blood and blood products. Although a number of ways of getting infected have been identified, as many as 40% of infected patients are unable to pinpoint exactly how they became infected. Many people infected with this virus feel fine for years, or may simply experience fatigue, loss of appetite, and/or nausea. Symptoms often do not appear until it is too late to effectively treat the disease. Hepatitis C develops into a chronic infection in up to 85% of newly infected people. Like chronic hepatitis B, if left untreated chronic hepatitis C has a greater chance of developing into cirrhosis, liver cancer, or even liver failure. Liver failure due to chronic hepatitis C infection is the leading cause of liver transplants in the United States. There is currently no vaccine available for the prevention of hepatitis C.



## WHO IS AT RISK FOR HEPATITIS C?

There is no such thing as a “typical” hepatitis C patient. People from all walks of life are at risk for hepatitis C. It affects both men and women, and people of all ethnic backgrounds and ages are at risk.

### You are at risk for hepatitis C if you’ve:

- Had a blood transfusion before 1992, including blood received during a cesarean section
- Had hemodialysis (treatment with a kidney machine)
- Had contact with blood in the workplace or military
- Had a tattoo (using contaminated needles or ink)
- Tried IV drugs, even just once, or snorted cocaine or other drugs (from a shared straw or bill)
- Shared a razor, toothbrush, or any item that could carry infected blood
- Had unprotected sex with multiple partners

*Take a minute to fill out the hepatitis C risk questionnaire on the back of this brochure. This will help determine if you are at risk.*

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I’M AT RISK?

If you think you might have been exposed to hepatitis C, see your regular doctor (primary care physician). A simple blood test can determine if you have been infected. Even if you are in doubt, GET TESTED!

Being tested is important because the treatment options today are more effective than ever. There are specific tests your doctor can order to identify hepatitis A, B, and C. Also, during a routine physical examination, your doctor may tell you that you have an “elevated ALT test” or “raised liver enzymes,” which can be a sign of hepatitis or other liver diseases. In this case, he or she will recommend further testing to determine the exact problem.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR HEPATITIS C?

*If you already have been diagnosed with hepatitis C, call the Moving Forward™ toll-free hotline for free information and support. Call 1-866-444-3004. A service brought to you by Schering Hepatitis Innovations.*

**Moving  
Forward™**



## TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE

If you have hepatitis C and do not receive treatment, you may increase the risk of developing life-threatening liver damage (cirrhosis, liver cancer, or liver failure). Fortunately, effective treatment options for hepatitis C are available. Hepatitis C is most commonly treated with therapies available by prescription from your doctor.

It is very important to discuss treatment options with your doctor—or with a specialist, such as a gastroenterologist, hepatologist, or infectious disease specialist—as soon as possible.

Studies show that the sooner therapy is begun, the better the chances are of the treatment working to prevent further liver damage.

Today, many hepatitis patients are succeeding in leading active, fulfilling lives while they manage their condition. You can, too. So be sure to talk to your health care provider.



**Bristol Park Medical Group**  
[www.bristolparkmed.com](http://www.bristolparkmed.com)

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT HEPATITIS C?

*Here are a few valuable resources you can contact to learn more about hepatitis C:*

### *American Liver Foundation*

75 Maiden Lane, Suite 603, New York, NY 10038  
1-800-GO-LIVER (1-800-465-4837)  
(English and Spanish)  
1-888-4-HEP-ABC (1-888-443-7222)  
[www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org)

### *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hepatitis Branch*

1600 Clifton Rd. NE, Atlanta, GA 30333  
1-888-443-7232  
Hours: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM (except holidays),  
Monday–Friday (EST)  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/resource/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/resource/)

### *Hep C Alert*

1-877-HELP-4-HEP (1-877-435-7443)  
[www.hep-c-alert.org](http://www.hep-c-alert.org)

### *Hep C Connection*

1177 Grant Street, Suite 200, Denver, CO 80203  
1-800-522-HEPC (1-800-522-4372)  
Colorado residents: 1-303-393-9395  
[www.hepc-connection.org](http://www.hepc-connection.org)

### *Latino Organization for Liver Awareness*

P.O. Box 842, Throgs Neck Station, Bronx, NY 10465  
1-718-892-8697 Languages: English and Spanish  
Hours: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (EST)

### *Moving Forward™*

1-866-444-3004