



GROUP HEALTH CENTRE

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Ontario Hepatitis Nursing Program

How is Hep C Passed On?

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You can get Hep C when your blood comes in contact with blood that is infected with Hep C.

Here are the ways that people can catch Hep C:

- ~ Blood transfusion with Hep C-infected blood.
- ~ Transplant of an organ, graft or tissue from a Hep C-infected donor.
- ~ Vaccination with a Hep C-infected needle.
- ~ Surgery with Hep C-infected equipment.
- ~ Healthcare worker injured by Hep C-infected needle stick or sharps.
- ~ Intravenous drug use (*sharing Hep C-infected needles, water or cookers*).
- ~ Injecting steroids (*sharing Hep C-infected needles*).
- ~ Snorting drugs (*sharing Hep C-infected straws, etc.*).
- ~ Sharing crack pipes with someone who is Hep C-infected and has bleeding lips and your lips are also bleeding.
- ~ Acupuncture, piercing, or tattooing with Hep C-infected equipment.
- ~ Sharing Hep C-infected toothbrushes, razors or nail clippers.
- ~ Fighting with someone who has Hep C, if there is blood-to-blood contact.
- ~ Sexual contact with someone who has Hep C (*about 5 in 100*).
- ~ Babies born to mothers who have Hep C (*about 5-10 in 100*).
- ~ Sometimes we can't figure out how someone caught the Hep C virus.

The following situations may put people at risk for Hep C:

- ~ People with kidney problems who have had their blood filtered through long-term hemodialysis.
- ~ Sexual partners of intravenous drug users.
- ~ Sex-trade workers.
- ~ People with many sexual partners.
- ~ People who have spent time in prison.
- ~ People from countries where there is a lot of Hep C.

How is Hep C NOT Spread?

- ~ Casual contact at work, school, church, public gatherings or sports activities.
- ~ Contact with saliva (*kissing*), vomit, urine or feces.
- ~ Sharing cutlery, dishes or drinking glasses.
- ~ Swimming in a pool with treated water.
- ~ Insect bites.

Hep C is spread through blood-to-blood contact only.

If a body fluid (*saliva, vomit, urine, semen*) contains visible amounts of blood, it is possible to get Hep C from the blood in the fluids--but only if the blood comes in contact with your blood.

Hep C and Sex:

- ~ The presence of other sexually transmitted infections (*ex. herpes, warts*) increases the chances of passing on Hep C.
- ~ Always wear a condom if you have a number of sexual partners.
- ~ If you are in a long-term relationship, the chances of passing on Hep C are extremely low--it is up to you and your partner to decide whether or not you want to use condoms.
- ~ Avoid having sexual relations with a woman when she has her period.

“People get Hep C in many different ways. It doesn't matter how you got it - try not to feel guilty and focus on being good to yourself and staying healthy.”
Mona (Registered Nurse)

