



## GROUP HEALTH CENTRE

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## Ontario Hepatitis Nursing Program

# How Does Hep C Affect Your Liver?

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~ Most people (2 out of 3) with Hep C don't develop serious liver disease and they can feel normal and healthy.

~ It usually takes 20-30 years to develop serious liver disease.

### PHASE I: Infection

~ Hep C virus enters the liver through the blood.

~ Hep C virus reproduces and gets into more liver cells.

### PHASE II: Inflammation

~ Infected liver cells become swollen (*inflamed*).

~ The swelling causes the liver cells to die.

### PHASE III: Fibrosis

~ In time, scarring (*fibrosis*) of the liver develops among the healthy and swollen cells.

~ The development of scarring can depend on how long a person has had Hep C.

### PHASE IV: Cirrhosis

~ With increased scarring, the liver becomes hard and this is called cirrhosis.

~ Cirrhosis affects normal liver function.

~ People with cirrhosis are more likely to get liver cancer.

### How will you feel if your liver becomes damaged from Hep C?

~ Many people who have Hep C feel normal and healthy.


~ You may or may not have some of the following signs of liver disease:

- Feeling tired, less energetic and not able to work as much.
- A tender, achy feeling on right side.
- Decreased appetite, which causes weight loss.
- Bruising and bleeding easily.

~ Signs of Advanced Liver Disease:

- May or may not have abnormal blood tests.
- Yellow skin and eyes (*jaundice*).
- Fluid builds up in the stomach area.
- Muscle cramps.
- Vomiting blood that comes from veins in the throat area.
- Passing blood in bowel movements.
- Poor memory, reduced ability to concentrate or mental confusion.
- Weight loss.
- Bleeding very easily.
- Itchy skin.

~ Sometimes people feel many of the signs of cirrhosis - but tests show that their livers are not damaged at all. Some of these signs may be caused by something other than liver disease.



“Remain hopeful because there is lots that we can do to help you live well with Hep C.” Len (Community Health Doctor)