

What is Chronic Hepatitis C?



About 2.4 million people in the US are living with chronic hepatitis C today.

Chronic hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus. It's often asymptomatic until significant liver damage occurs and is mainly transmitted through blood-to-blood contact, such as sharing needles or syringes, blood transfusions (prior to 1992), and sexual contact. It is not spread through casual contact.

Symptoms Many individuals with chronic hepatitis C may not experience symptoms for years. When symptoms appear, they can include fatigue, joint pain, abdominal pain, and jaundice.

Diagnosis and Treatment

- **Diagnosis:** Diagnosed with blood tests.
- **Medications:** Antiviral medications for typically 2–3 months can often cure hepatitis C. These medications are safe, effective, and have very few side effects.
- **Monitoring:** Individuals with chronic hepatitis C need to be monitored for cirrhosis (liver scarring) and liver cancer. This may mean bloodwork and ultrasounds twice a year.



Preventing Transmission & Further Liver Damage

- Avoid risky behaviors like sharing needles and unprotected sex.
- Avoid alcohol and maintain a healthy weight.
- Get vaccinated against other liver viruses like hepatitis A and hepatitis B.