

Hepatitis C (HCV) Assessment

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) that may lead to either acute or chronic states of the illness. Acute hepatitis C is typically asymptomatic and must be diagnosed by laboratory tests. The most common cause of contraction of this virus is due to injection drug use, but it may also be spread through exposure to infectious blood or body fluids, as well as perinatally by mothers infected with HCV.



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Transmission

Blood Transmission

[Blood Transmitted](#)

Hepatitis C virus can be spread by exposure to infectious blood. This includes perinatal transmission, which means a mother can pass the virus to the fetus during childbirth. Additionally, accidental needle sticks contaminated with infected blood are another source of transmission.

High Risk Sex

[Up-arrow Risk Sex](#)

Sexual activity with multiple partners can increase the risk of transmission of hepatitis C. Other risk factors include a history of unprotected sex, risky or harmful sexual practices, men having unprotected sex with men, as well as sex trade work. These type of encounters may lead to micro-abrasions, and is usually present in patients who have had sexual transmission of the disease.

People Who Use IV Drugs

[IV Drug](#)

Injection drug use remains the most common cause of acquiring acute hepatitis C. The virus is easily transmitted through needles and syringes contaminated with infected blood. Other risk factors include body piercing, tattoos, and hemodialysis.

Incubation

7 Weeks

[Lucky \(7\) Slot Machine](#)

The incubation period for hepatitis C is a range between 6 to 7 weeks. The greatest risk of infectivity occurs 1-2 weeks before the onset of symptoms. Greater than 80% of patients go on to develop chronic hepatitis C and remain infectious.

Chronic Disease

Cirrhosis

[C-roses-on-liver](#)

The majority of patients with hepatitis C develop chronic infection; however, most are unaware of their infection potentially for months or years until symptoms of the chronic disease are manifested. Liver cirrhosis or scarring of the liver is a complication of the chronic disease. Jaundice is often the first sign.

Considerations

Barrier Protection

[Condoms](#)

Barrier protection is important to help decrease transmission of this disease. Educate high risk patients, such as individuals who have multiple partners to use a condom to prevent spread of this virus.