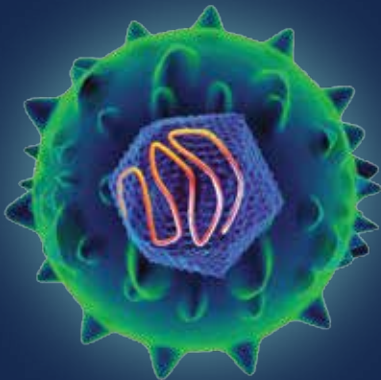


HEPATITIS C



DISPELLING THE MYTHS

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS C?

And how much of what you know is actually true?

Spend a little time with this myth-busting booklet, and you'll quickly learn how much of what you think you know is true, and how much is myth!

Put your knowledge to the test – and prepare to be surprised!

MYTH /

“Why should I worry about hepatitis C? It isn’t that common. I hear a lot more about a disease like HIV.”

FACT 1

Actually, hepatitis C is a lot MORE common than HIV.

The global impact of hepatitis C is considerable, with an estimated prevalence five times greater than HIV.

In Canada, hepatitis C is about 3.5 times more common than HIV. In 2011, it was estimated that up to 245,000 Canadians were living with chronic hepatitis C, compared to an estimated 71,000 people living with HIV.

**In Canada, hepatitis C
is about 3.5 times more common
than HIV.**

MYTH 2

**“Even if I got hepatitis C,
it’s not like it’s a serious
infection.”**

FACT 2

Hepatitis C is serious enough that it can lead to death.

In 2007, Canadians suffered the following hepatitis C virus-related consequences, and in the following numbers:

Death	483
Liver transplant	134
Liver cancer	292
Liver failure	473
Cirrhosis	802

MYTH 3

**“I’ve been vaccinated
against hepatitis A
and B, so I can’t get
hepatitis C.”**

FACT 3

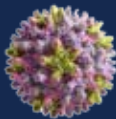
Hepatitis A and B vaccines offer no protection against hepatitis C.

There are numerous forms of hepatitis, and all differ in terms of prevention, progression, transmission and treatment. The three most prevalent types are hepatitis A, B and C.

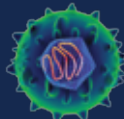
There are currently vaccinations available for hepatitis A and B. However, there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.



Hepatitis
A



Hepatitis
B



Hepatitis
C

MYTH 4

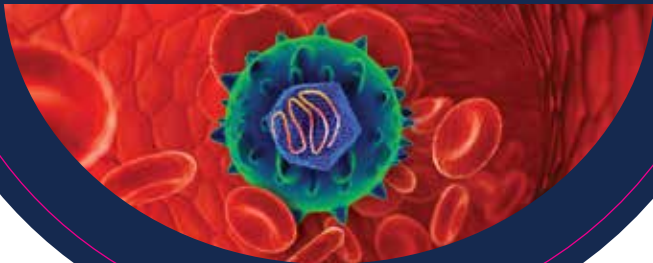
“Hepatitis C is a sexually transmitted infection.”

FACT 4

Hepatitis C CAN be transmitted sexually, but it is UNCOMMON.

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus spread by contact with the blood of an infected individual. Sexual transmission, though it is still possible, is less common.

Hepatitis B is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood or semen and is most commonly spread through sexual contact.



MYTH 5

**“You can get hepatitis C
by consuming
contaminated food
or drink.”**

FACT 5

Hepatitis C is NOT transmitted by contaminated food or drink.

Hepatitis C is spread when an infected person's blood enters the bloodstream of another person.

Hepatitis A transmission is possible when a person ingests fecal matter from objects, food or drinks contaminated by an infected person. Although people who get hepatitis A may become ill for several months, they usually recover completely without long-term liver damage.



MYTH 6

“Only people who have had tattoos or injected drugs can get hepatitis C.”

FACT 6

Hepatitis C is **NOT** only transmitted by tattoos and injected drug use.

These are common ways to spread the disease, since unsafe injection practices can bring someone in contact with an infected person's blood. But hepatitis C is **ALSO** commonly spread by poorly sterilized medical equipment in some health care settings, as well as by transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products.

It should be noted that in Canada, blood products have been screened for hepatitis C since 1992 and are considered safe.



MYTH >

“A person I work with has just been diagnosed with hepatitis C. We share the same work space, and now I’m concerned I may have it.”

FACT >

**You CANNOT be infected
by hepatitis C just by being
near someone with it.**

Hepatitis C is not spread by sneezing, coughing, food or water, sharing food and drinks with an infected person, or through casual contact such as hugging, shaking or holding hands.



MYTH 8

“I know someone who had a blood transfusion last year and I’m worried he may have contracted hepatitis C.”

FACT 8

**FOR OVER 2 DECADES,
the Canadian blood supply
has been considered safe.**

While many people became infected with hepatitis C through blood products in the past, the risk of this happening now is next to none due to high standards ensuring the safety of the blood supply.

Since 1992, blood transfusions and other blood products have been screened for the hepatitis C virus in Canada and are considered safe.



MYTH 9

“I look and feel healthy. There is no way I have a serious illness like hepatitis C.”

FACT 9

You can have hepatitis C for DECADES and not know it.

In fact, in 2011, an estimated 44% of Canadians living with chronic hepatitis C infection did not know they had the virus. This means that almost 100,000 Canadians could unknowingly spread hepatitis C to others.

Symptoms of chronic hepatitis C can take 30 years to develop. It is estimated that only one in five people will show any symptoms in the first six months, which may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, stomach pains, sickness and jaundice.

**The only way to diagnose hepatitis C
is with a specific blood test.**

MYTH 10

“I’ve had hepatitis C and was treated for the disease. I don’t have to worry about getting it again.”

FACT 10

Successful treatment for hepatitis C does **NOT** make you immune to it.

Even if patients have successfully been treated for hepatitis C, patients can be re-infected.

It is important to understand the risks for re-infection and ways to avoid it.



MYTH II

**“Hepatitis C
can’t be cured.”**

FACT 11

Actually, hepatitis C CAN be cured.

Hepatitis C is the only chronic viral infectious disease that may be “virologically cured”. “Virologic cure” means sustained virologic response (the absence of detectable virus in a person’s bloodstream) 24 weeks after the end of treatment (SVR₂₄). However, recent data suggest that earlier assessment at 12 weeks after treatment (SVR₁₂) is enough to define this outcome.

People infected with hepatitis C should have regular follow-ups with their health care provider – for their overall health, and to be kept up to date on the latest treatments.

MYTH 12

“Hepatitis C isn’t that serious. It’s just like hepatitis B.”

FACT 12

Hepatitis C infections are MUCH MORE likely than hepatitis B infections to become chronic, and more likely again to lead to chronic liver disease.

Hepatitis B and C are similar infections in that they are both spread through contact with contaminated blood. The hepatitis B virus can also be sexually transmitted.

However, hepatitis B and C have a different potential for chronic infection and severity.

FACT 12



HEPATITIS B

HEPATITIS C

Potential for chronic infection

Chronic infection in ~**10%** of people infected

Up to 85% of people infected develop chronic infection

Severity

15%-25% of chronically infected people **develop chronic liver disease**, including cirrhosis, liver failure, or liver cancer

60%-70% of chronically infected people **develop chronic liver disease**

- **2%-20%** develop **cirrhosis** after 20-30 years
- **1%-4%** develop **liver cancer** each year

There are only vaccinations available for hepatitis B, not hepatitis C.

HEPATITIS

PREVENT HEPATITIS: IT'S UP TO YOU

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