



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada



# Hepatitis C Fact Sheet

<b>Cause</b>	<p>Hepatitis C virus (HCV)  Identified in 1989  Responsible for 90% of non-A, non-B hepatitis cases following blood transfusion prior to 1989  HCV is a viral infection carried in the blood  There are 6 genotypes and more than 100 subtypes of HCV identified.</p>	
<b>Clinical Characteristics</b>	<p>Incubation Period ..... Average 6-7 weeks  Acute Illness ..... Mild acute illness is seen in less than 25 % of infected people  Chronic Infection ..... 70-80% of people progress to chronic infection  Death from Chronic Liver Disease,  Disease from liver Damage, and Cancer ..... 1-5% of infected people per year.  of the Liver</p>	
<b>Signs and Symptoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) can occur in 20-30% of those infected. Other general symptoms such as uneasiness, loss of appetite, pain in the stomach area, dark urine and fatigue can be seen in 10-20% of those infected.</li> <li>» About 70-80% of people show no signs or symptoms of infection.</li> <li>» About 20-30% of individuals who are infected with acute Hep C will recover without treatment.</li> </ul>	
<b>Modes of Transmission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Exposure to blood or blood products infected with HCV</li> <li>» An infected mother can pass the infection to her newborn child (vertical transmission).</li> <li>» Sexual transmission is a rare event, but can happen in the presence of blood.</li> <li>» Household transmission through sharing of razors, toothbrushes and combs is possible</li> </ul>	
<b>Persons at Risk</b>	<p><u>Persons</u></p> <p>Recipients of blood, tissues, or organs prior to 1990  Recipients of blood clotting factors (e.g. Factor VIII) prior to 1992  Injection Drug Users  People who "snort" drugs  Hemodialysis patients  People getting tattoos and body piercings with tools that are not sterile (e.g. in prison)  People who have sex with a Hep C carrier  Babies born to Hep C infected mothers  Health Care Workers</p>	<p><u>Level of Risk</u></p> <p>High  High  High  High  Medium  Medium  Medium  Low  Low</p>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» If your job regularly exposes you to blood or blood products from others, try to protect yourself with gloves to reduce the risk of the spread of viruses.</li> <li>» If you use injection drugs, ensure you use clean, sterile needles. Sharing needles, syringes or other drug-use equipment with others can put you at risk of infection.</li> </ul>	
<b>Treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Treatment of people with new Hep C infections with long acting interferon and ribavirin can get rid of the virus in up to 60% of people within 24 to 48 weeks.</li> </ul>	
<b>Canadian Data on the trends of HCV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Incidence is currently between 10-20 cases per 100,000 /year in Canada</li> <li>» Prevalence was estimated at 250,000 or 0.8% of the Canadian population in 2002.</li> </ul>	