

WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE IN HOSPITAL?

- Staff will follow routine practices.
- Staff will wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling any blood or body fluids.
- You will not be required to stay in your room because of your infection with Hepatitis C.

WHAT FAMILY AND FRIENDS SHOULD DO WHEN VISITING

- Clean their hands before entering and when leaving the room.

HAND HYGIENE
THE BEST
WAY TO PREVENT
INFECTION



Special care must be paid to hand hygiene as it is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.

GOOD HAND HYGIENE INCLUDES:

Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

1. Apply to palm of one hand.
2. Rub hands together, covering all of hands and fingers.
3. Rub until hands feel dry.

Hand Washing

1. Remove all jewelry.
2. Use warm running water and soap.
3. Spend at least **15-30** seconds lathering and washing hands.
4. Rub hands together, paying attention to fingertips, between the fingers, and thumbs.
5. Rinse thoroughly.
6. Dry with paper towel and turn off tap with paper towel.
7. Dispose of paper towel in the garbage.

IT'S OK TO ASK NURSES, DOCTORS, AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS IF THEY HAVE CLEANED THEIR HANDS.

ASK VISITORS IF THEY HAVE WASHED THEIR HANDS.

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HEPATITIS C

Information for Clients, Residents, Families, and Visitors

INFECTION PREVENTION
& CONTROL PROGRAM
www.easternhealth.ca



WHAT IS HEPATITIS C (HEP C)?

- Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a disease of the liver caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).
- This virus is contagious and is found in the blood.
- There is no known vaccine for HCV.
- HCV is a reportable infection in Canada.
- Hep C changes happen slowly; it can be managed and in many cases treated successfully if found early.

HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

- The HCV is found in the blood of infected individuals.
- It is spread through contact with infected blood.
- It is **NOT** spread through close contact such as hugging, kissing, shaking hands, coughing, or sneezing.
- It is **NOT** found in food or water.

WHO CAN GET HEP C ?

- You will **NOT** get the disease from day-to-day contact with a HCV infected individual.
- To get Hep C you must have blood-to-blood contact with an infected individual.
- Although not a sexually transmitted infection, transmission may occur during unprotected sex if there is blood-to-blood contact.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Being born to a Hep C positive mother.
- Health care workers with a needle stick injury.
- Individuals who share razors or drug supplies that may be contaminated with blood.

HOW CAN HEP C DISEASE BE PREVENTED?

- If pregnant, you should know your HCV status.
- Do not share needles or other drug supplies.
- Do not share personal items such as razors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes.
- Practice safe sex with no blood-to-blood contact.
- Take appropriate precautions when in contact with blood - wear gloves and clean your hands.
- Do not donate blood, organs, or semen if you are positive for HCV.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HEP C DISEASE?

- Jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes).
- Fatigue, loss of appetite, lethargy.
- Light colored stool.
- Sore muscles and joints, abdominal pain, and nausea.
- Most infected individuals will not have any symptoms but they can still transmit the virus; that is why it is important to take precautions.

HOW TO MANAGE HEP C

- Currently treatment is a combination of antiviral medications.
- Treatment is aimed at decreasing the “viral load” or the amount of virus in the blood.
- Drug treatment may be available if Hep C is more advanced. This requires careful assessment by your physician.
- Natural remedies have been on the rise in recent years but should only be taken after consultation with your physician. Others interact with conventional medications and decrease or change the effectiveness of the drug.
- Liver transplants are not considered until an individual experiences liver failure. The success rate is 80% but infection of the liver with Hep C will reoccur.
- **Acute:** Approximately 25% will have a mild, brief disease and get rid of the virus completely. The antibodies usually are detectable in the blood but the actual viral material is not.
- **Chronic:** For approximately 75% of cases, the virus will not disappear. If the virus is detected after 6 months this is considered a chronic infection. These individuals will have HCV infection for the rest of their lives.