



Facts at a Glance

Hepatitis C

- Hepatitis C is one of five known viruses that cause inflammation of the liver (the others are A, B, D, and E).
- Hepatitis C is the most common chronic blood borne infection in the United States.
- There is no vaccine available to prevent hepatitis C.
- Hepatitis C can be identified through a simple blood test.
- The World Health Organization has estimated that roughly 3% of the world population has been infected with the hepatitis C virus and that there are more than 170 million chronic carriers who are at risk of developing liver cirrhosis and/or liver cancer.
- There are 36,000 new cases of hepatitis C reported each year.
- Almost 4 million Americans, or 1.8 percent of the U.S. population, are or have been infected with hepatitis C.
- Hepatitis C is four time more infectious than the AIDS virus.
- Hepatitis C turns into a chronic disease for over 70 percent of those infected.
- If not treated, hepatitis C can cause cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death.
- Chronic hep C is the leading indication for adult liver transplantation in the U.S.
- It can take 10 to 20 years after infection for symptoms of the disease to appear.
- Hepatitis is spread from one individual to another when the infected blood of one person enters the bloodstream of the other person.
- The best ways to avoid becoming infected with hepatitis C include avoiding direct contact with other people's blood, not sharing combs, toothbrushes or other personal grooming articles that may have blood on them and always use a sterile needle if injecting drugs.
- Hepatitis C is currently responsible for 8,000-10,000 deaths annually in the U.S.
- It is estimated that within 20 years hepatitis C will cause more deaths annually in the U.S. than AIDS.