



KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS C

Aster
HOSPITAL

We'll Treat You Well



Digital Version



WHY IS LIVER IMPORTANT?

The largest internal organ in the body, the liver is absolutely vital for survival. It has a lot of vital functions:

- Produces bile, a mixture of chemicals, which aids digestion.
- Helps break down food to turn it into energy.
- Removes harmful substances from the blood, helping fight infection.
- Makes chemicals that are important for blood clotting.
- Stores iron, vitamins and other essential substances.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV causes inflammation of the liver and prevents it from working well. HCV usually causes long-term or chronic infection of the liver and unless successfully treated with medications, can lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, and liver failure.

WHO IS AT RISK OF HAVING HEPATITIS C?

HCV is spread by blood to blood contact. You may be at risk if you have:

- Used intravenous drugs in the past and shared needles for injecting these drugs
- Received blood transfusion in the past especially from unregulated blood banks
- Chronic kidney disease and are on hemodialysis
- Contact with infected needles or blood
- Unprotected sex with multiple partners

WHAT DOES NOT CAUSE HEPATITIS C?

- HCV is not spread by sneezing, hugging, or coughing or casual contact
- HCV is not spread by food or water, sharing utensils or drinking glasses

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF HEPATITIS C?

HCV damages the liver slowly over a period of 20-30 years. More than 50 percent of patients with untreated Hepatitis C progress to liver cirrhosis which is scarring of the liver. Once cirrhosis develops, patients are at a risk of developing liver failure. 5 to 10 percent of these patients develop liver cancer.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HEPATITIS C?

Patients during the early phase of infection have no symptoms and feel absolutely healthy. When the disease progresses resulting in liver cirrhosis, they display symptoms such as tiredness, nausea, loss of appetite, skin itching, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Once liver failure occurs, patients develop swelling of the legs (edema), fluid in the abdomen (ascites), vomiting of blood, and mental confusion.

HOW IS HEPATITIS C DIAGNOSED?

Hepatitis C is diagnosed by simple blood tests. Specialised tests reveal the amount of virus in a patient's blood. A

liver function test and an ultrasound scan of the liver can thoroughly assess its state. A special scan called Fibroscan can determine the severity of disease and whether one has reached the stage of cirrhosis. Sometimes, a liver biopsy may be required.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE DIAGNOSED TO HAVE HEPATITIS C?

You must talk to a liver disease specialist regarding treatment for Hepatitis C. With the availability of newer antiviral drugs, treatment has become very simple. You must also get your spouse and other close family members checked for Hepatitis C.

HOW IS HEPATITIS C TREATED?

There is an effective treatment for HCV infection: Directly Acting Anti-viral drugs (DAA). These new drugs include Sofosbuvir, Daclatasvir and Ledipasvir. Most patients are cured within three months of treatment. Some patients who have advanced disease, or who have failed treatment in the past may require longer treatment – up to 6 months. Such therapies are effective in curing 90% of patients. Even patients who have failed treatment in the past or who have advanced liver disease can be effectively cured.

HOW CAN PATIENTS WITH HEPATITIS C AND LIVER FAILURE BE TREATED?

Once patients with HCV develop cirrhosis and liver failure, they cannot be treated with medicines. The only option for such patients is to undergo liver transplantation. Overall, about 10 percent of patients with Hepatitis C require the procedure. The risk of the new liver getting re-infected with Hepatitis C is there but can be easily treated with modern antiviral drugs.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS C?

There is no vaccine to prevent HCV. The only way to stop the spread of HCV is to avoid direct contact with infected blood.

- Ensure healthcare providers use clean and sterile equipment and do not reuse injection needles.
- Ensure that blood being transfused is from an authorised private / government blood bank.
- Practice safe sex.
- Use clean needles and equipment for tattoos, ear and nose piercings.
- Do not share razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items with others.

HEPATITIS C – FACTS AT A GLANCE

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV).

- HCV is spread by direct contact with infected blood.
- About 0.5 to 1 percent of the population is HCV positive.
- Most people with HCV have no symptoms.
- HCV can be diagnosed by a simple blood test.
- HCV causes progressive liver disease and leads to liver cirrhosis and liver failure.
- HCV is an important cause of liver cancer.
- HCV can be effectively treated with medications.
- There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C.



PLEASE SCAN FOR
THE LOCATION

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