



SANDUSKY COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

HEPATITIS C

What is Hepatitis C?

- A serious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV).
- HCV is a blood-borne virus that can be spread through infected needles, razors, or other objects that allow the virus to enter the body.
- For some people, Hepatitis C is a short-term illness (acute), but for more than half of people who become infected with the Hepatitis C virus, it becomes a long-term, chronic infection.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Acute hepatitis C is defined as the first 12 months after an individual is infected with hepatitis C. Acute infection is usually asymptomatic. When symptoms do occur, they can include one or more of the following:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored stool
- Abdominal pain
- Yellow skin and eyes
- Nausea
- Joint pain

Signs of illness typically begin 2 weeks to 6 months after being exposed to the virus

How does it spread?

Hepatitis C virus is spread primarily by direct contact with human blood, particularly through large or repeated percutaneous (i.e., passage through the skin) exposures to infectious blood, including:

- Injection drug use (currently the most common means of HCV transmission in the United States).
- Receipt of donated blood, blood products, and organs (once a common means of transmission, but now rare in the United States since blood screening became available in 1992).
- Needle stick injuries in healthcare settings.
- Birth to an HCV-infected mother.

HCV can also be spread infrequently through:

- Sex with an HCV-infected person.
- Sharing personal items contaminated with infectious blood such as razors or toothbrushes.
- Unregulated tattooing.

How can you protect yourself from getting Hepatitis C

- Do not ever shoot drugs. If you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program. If you cannot stop, never reuse or share syringes, water, or drug works, and be vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, or other personal care articles. They might have blood on them.
- If you are a healthcare worker, always follow Standard Precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps. Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- Consider the health risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing.

For more information, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/>