

# Hepatitis c



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HEPATITIS C Hepatitis C is an infectious disease primarily affecting the liver, caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). [1] The infection is often asymptomatic, but chronic infection can lead to scarring of the liver and ultimately to cirrhosis, which is generally apparent after many years. In some cases, those with cirrhosis will go on to develop liver failure, liver cancer or life-threatening esophageal and gastric varices. [1] The hepatitis C virus is spread by primarily by blood-to-blood contact associated with intravenous drug use in the developed world or poorly sterilized medical equipment and transfusions in the developing world.

The virus persists in the liver in about 85% of those infected. This persistent infection can be treated with medication; peginterferon and ribavirin are the current standard therapy. Overall, between 50-80% of people treated are cured. Those who develop cirrhosis or liver cancer may require a liver transplant, and the virus universally recurs after transplantation. An estimated 130-170 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis C. No vaccine against hepatitis C is currently available. The existence of hepatitis C (originally " non-A non-B hepatitis") was postulated in the 1970s and proven in 1989. 2] It is not known to cause disease in other animals. Signs and symptoms [edit] Acute infection Hepatitis C infection causes acute symptoms in 15% of cases. [3] For those that do manifest symptoms, they are in general mild and vague, including a decreased appetite, fatigue, nausea, muscle or joint pains, and weight loss. [4] Most cases of acute infection are not associated with jaundice. [5] The infection resolves spontaneously in 10-50% of cases being more likely in those who are young and females. 5] [edit] Chronic infection About 80% of those exposed to the

viral develop a chronic infection. [6] Most of those during the initial few decades of the infection have little or no symptoms[7] although chronic hepatitis C can be associated with fatigue. [8] Hepatitis C after many years becomes the primary cause of cirrhosis, and liver cancer. [9] About 10-30% of people develop cirrhosis over 30 years. [4][9] Cirrhosis is more common in those co infected with hepatitis B or HIV, alcoholics, and those of male gender. 4] In those who develop cirrhosis their risk of hepatocellular carcinoma is 20 fold greater or 1-3% per year[4][9] and if this is complicated by excess alcohol the risk becomes 100 fold greater. [10] Hepatitis C is the cause of 27% of cirrhosis and 25% of hepatocellular carcinoma worldwide. [11] Liver cirrhosis may lead to portal hypertension, ascites (accumulation of fluid in the abdomen), easy bruising or bleeding, varices (enlarged veins, especially in the stomach and esophagus), jaundice, and a syndrome of cognitive impairment known as hepatic encephalopathy.

It is thus one of the common causes for needing a liver transplant. [12] [edit] Extrahepatic Hepatitis C is also rarely associated with sicca syndrome (an autoimmune disorder), thrombocytopenia, lichen planus, diabetes mellitus, and B-cell lymphoproliferative disorders. [13] Thrombocytopenia is estimated to occur in 0. 16% to 45. 4% of people with chronic disease. [14] A putative associate with Hyde's prurigo nodularis has been reported[15] as is an association with membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis