

## **🔒 If you can't get treated for HCV while you're locked up**

There may be limitations on who is eligible for treatment in prison or jail. Doctors will consider many factors, including your current liver health, the length of your sentence, and your medical history.

If you have been told that you are not eligible for HCV treatment or you have to wait:

- ✓ Ask questions so you know why it is being delayed or denied
- ✓ Follow procedures at your facility to get more answers
- ✓ Continue to see your nurses and doctors regularly to stay healthy, monitor your liver, catch any problems early, and prepare for treatment in the future
- ✓ Make sure you get copies of your medical records during release so you can follow up with your doctor
- ✓ Ask your facility to help you sign up for health insurance or Medicaid when you are released from custody
- ✓ After release, consider enrolling in patient assistance programs offered by drug companies or ask about clinical trials

While it may be frustrating to wait for treatment, know that many people live with hepatitis C for years without problems. Ask your doctor or someone you trust for more information. You may also write to the NHCN at the address below to ask questions.



**BE SAFE. BE HEALTHY.  
LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT HEPATITIS C.**

The National Hepatitis Corrections Network  
911 Western Ave, Suite 302  
Seattle, WA 98104  
[www.hcvinprison.org](http://www.hcvinprison.org)







# **HEPATITIS C IN PRISON AND JAIL**

Produced by:



## WHAT IS HEPATITIS C (HCV)?

Hepatitis C, also called “HCV,” is a virus  that can hurt your liver.  It is spread through infected blood.  Most people do not have symptoms from HCV right away, but without treatment, HCV can cause severe liver damage called **cirrhosis**. There are medications that can cure HCV.  Many people in prison or jail in the USA have HCV.

## HOW DO I GET HEPATITIS C (HCV)?

You get HCV when the blood of someone who has HCV gets into your body through an open cut or an open sore.

### ✗ Most common ways to get hepatitis C (HCV):



**Sharing** needles, cookers, cottons, water and other injection drug equipment *\*Boiling, burning, or rinsing needles with water or bleach does NOT fully protect against HCV transmission!*



**Sharing** tattoo needles, tattoo ink, tattoo guns, or piercing equipment



**Blood transfusions** that occurred before 1992

### ⊖ Other ways to get hepatitis C (HCV):



**Sharing** straws or dollars for snorting drugs



**Sharing** hygiene equipment such as razors, toothbrushes, and clippers



Getting into **fights**



Unsafe, unprotected, or rough **sexual activity** especially if blood is present or if one partner has HIV



**Blood spills** that are not well cleaned

### ✓ It is **NOT possible** to get hepatitis C (HCV) by:



**Casual contact** such as hugging, kissing, or sharing food or drinks



Simply **living in a cell** or unit with others



**Eating or drinking** in the chow hall



Sharing a **toilet or shower**



**Playing sports** in the yard or gym

## ARE HEPATITIS SERVICES PROVIDED IN PRISONS AND JAILS?

In prison or jail, you may have access to medical services for hepatitis. Remember, every prison and jail is different, meaning some services may not be available. Ask your doctors and nurses about what's available, and follow up regularly.



### **Hepatitis C is curable:**

HCV is treatable and it is **curable** for most people. Since 2013, many **new medications** have been released to treat HCV. Treatment can be complicated and your doctor will help you decide which treatment is right for you.



### **Vaccines for hepatitis A and B:**

Getting vaccinated **prevents** you from getting a virus even if you are exposed. You can't be vaccinated for hepatitis C, but you can be vaccinated for hepatitis A and hepatitis B. For people with hepatitis C, it's **very important** to be vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.



### **Hepatitis C testing:**

There are two parts to HCV testing: an **Antibody Test** is usually done first, and **can detect exposure** to the virus. The second test is called a **Viral Load Test**, and it **confirms** whether or not you have a current HCV **infection**.



### **Monitoring your liver:**

Doctors can monitor your **liver's health**. Some tests include *APRI score, liver function tests, fibroscan, and biopsy*. Ask your doctor which tests are available.



### **If you get cured:**

Even if your HCV infection is cured it is **possible** to get **re-infected**. Stay safe and healthy even after treatment.

## + How to stay as **healthy** as possible if you have HCV:

### **Things you should do:**

- ✓ See your health provider often
- ✓ Eat well and exercise when possible
- ✓ Learn as much as you can about HCV

### **Things you should avoid:**

- ✗ Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)
- ✗ Non-prescribed drugs (also marijuana)
- ✗ Over-the-counter drugs with acetaminophen (Tylenol)