



# Hepatitis C

Your Resource Guide  
for Staying Healthy  
with Hepatitis C



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

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**COLUMBUS**  
PUBLIC HEALTH







# You’ve Tested Positive for Hepatitis C ... Now What?

*This booklet will guide you through the steps you can take after testing positive for hepatitis C.*

## Confirm Your Diagnosis.

The screening test for hepatitis C is usually a hepatitis C antibody test. If this test is positive, it means you were exposed to the hepatitis C virus at some point in your life. If you only tested positive with a hepatitis C antibody test, you will need an additional test to see if you are still infected with the virus.

## Take Care of Yourself.

You can protect the health of your liver by eating a healthy diet, getting exercise, and avoiding drugs, alcohol and certain medications. It’s also important to get vaccinated for hepatitis A & B. **You can get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B free of charge when you bring the coupon included with this booklet to Columbus Public Health.**

## Get Hepatitis C Treatment.

Several new medications are available which can cure hepatitis C infection. The first step to getting treatment is to see a doctor who specializes in gastroenterology or infectious diseases. If you need help getting referred to a specialist or confirming your diagnosis with hepatitis C, Columbus Public Health can help. Our Linkage to Care program ensures you have access to confirmatory testing, educates you on your options if you have a detectable viral load, and helps you get support for transportation, insurance and other needs.

**You can reach Linkage to Care by calling 614-645-CARE (2273).**

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COLUMBUS  
PUBLIC HEALTH

240 Parsons Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43215  
[www.publichealth.columbus.gov](http://www.publichealth.columbus.gov)

## Questions?

For more information or to talk about hepatitis C, call Columbus Public Health at (614) 645-1474, option 2.

This booklet was developed by Columbus Public Health.

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# Hepatitis C Facts

## The Basics

### What Is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a viral disease that affects your liver and can cause chronic liver disease. Almost 4 million people in the U.S. have been infected with hepatitis C.

### What Are The Symptoms?

**3 out of 4**  
persons who are  
infected with  
hepatitis C have  
no symptoms.

The symptoms of hepatitis C are usually very mild. In fact, 3 out of 4 persons who are infected with hepatitis C have no symptoms and can infect others without knowing it. It can take many years from the time a person

is infected with the virus before symptoms like extreme fatigue, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer or liver failure occur.

## Infection Facts

### How Could I Get Infected With Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is mainly spread through blood which might happen by:

- Receiving blood transfusions, organ transplants or blood products before donor screening procedures were in place (1987).
- Using IV drugs and sharing needles and syringes.
- Receiving long-term kidney dialysis.
- Working in jobs where you are exposed to blood such as health care, EMS or a body art studio.
- Using unclean needles for tattoos or body piercings.
- Having sex with someone who has hepatitis C.

### What Are Some Ways I CANNOT Get Hepatitis C?

*Hepatitis C is not spread in food or water.* You also cannot get hepatitis C by:

- Sneezing or coughing
- Hugging
- Touching or shaking hands
- Kissing
- Sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses

## Testing Positive For Hepatitis C

### You Need A Doctor's Care.

- Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease that should be followed by a doctor, even if you feel well.
- If you have tested positive for hepatitis C, contact a doctor to treat you.

### You May Be Putting Others At Risk.

- Hepatitis C can be given to others through contact with an infected person's body fluids by having sex and sharing toothbrushes, razors or needles.
- If you have tested positive for hepatitis C, please contact people who may be at risk for any of these reasons.

### You Can Help Protect Others.

If you have hepatitis C, you can protect others from getting it by following these common sense rules:

- Do not share personal hygiene items that could have blood on them such as toothbrushes or razors.
- Wear a condom during sex.
- Clean blood spills with diluted household bleach (1/2 cup bleach to 2 1/2 cups water).
- Cover open cuts with Band-Aids.
- Do not donate blood, organs or body tissue.
- Do not share drug needles or cocaine straws with anyone.

### You May Have Questions.

For more information or to talk about having hepatitis C, call Columbus Public Health at (614) 645-1474.

## Out of 100 adults infected with hepatitis C...

**75-80** develop chronic hepatitis C

**60-70** develop chronic liver disease

**5-20** develop cirrhosis

**1-5** die from liver disease or cancer

If you've tested positive for hepatitis C or think you are at risk, seek care right away to help prevent these complications.







# Testing & Treatment

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## Screening for Hepatitis C

### Hepatitis C Antibody Test

The first screening test is usually a hepatitis C antibody test. If the antibody test is positive, it means that you were exposed to the hepatitis C virus at some point in your life. The antibody test does not show whether or not you still have the virus in your body. For some people (about 15-25%), the body's natural defenses get rid of the virus, but others will continue to carry the virus in their bodies. You need an additional RNA test to confirm a positive hepatitis C antibody test result.

It can take up to 6 months for hepatitis C antibodies to be detected in the blood, so a negative antibody test does not always mean you are negative for the virus. If you tested negative, but think you could have been infected in the last 6 months, you should wait 6 months and repeat the test again.

## Confirming Hepatitis C

### RNA (or PCR) Test

If you have a positive hepatitis C antibody test, the next step is to see a doctor to confirm the diagnosis with a test that detects the virus itself. This test is called a RNA test or PCR test. If this test is positive, you should see a doctor who is experienced in diagnosing and treating hepatitis C (such as an infectious disease specialist or gastroenterologist).

## Treatment for Hepatitis C

There are several medications to treat hepatitis C, including new treatments that appear to be more effective and have fewer side effects than previous options. Based on your medical history, physical exam, laboratory and other test results, your health care provider will suggest which medications are right for you. This decision will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The type of hepatitis C you have (called a "genotype")
- Whether or not you have liver disease (cirrhosis), and if it's mild (compensated) or severe (decompensated)
- If you've received treatment before and which medications were used
- Other health conditions you may have

Treatment regimens are usually 12 or 24 weeks, but sometimes longer.

#### Sources:

American Liver Foundation - [http://www.liverfoundation.org/downloads/alf\\_download\\_24.pdf](http://www.liverfoundation.org/downloads/alf_download_24.pdf)

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) - <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/hcvfaq.htm>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCGettingTested.pdf>

# Free Local Testing Sites

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These sites provide free hepatitis C testing. Results are typically ready within 20 minutes. The test (called an HCV antibody test) screens patients who have not already tested positive for hepatitis C.

### Columbus Public Health - Sexual Health Clinic

*Patients are seen on a first-come, first-serve basis. The clinic may stop taking patients if it becomes full.*

240 Parsons Ave. - 2nd Floor, Columbus  
614-645-7772

Monday: 8 a.m.-2:15 p.m.

Tuesday: 10 a.m.-6:15 p.m.

Wednesday: 8-11:15 a.m.

Thursday & Friday: 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m.

### Safe Point, Equitas Health

1033 N. High St., Columbus

614-340-6777

Saturday: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### Safe Point, Southeast Healthcare Services Inc. (Franklin Station)

524 W. Broad St., Columbus

614-225-0990

Friday: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### Out Of The Closet Thrift Store

1230 N. High St., Columbus

614-291-2680

Monday-Saturday: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.







# Staying Healthy with Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C affects the liver, the largest internal organ with many important functions. Here are the top 10 ways for you to stay healthy:



**Protect yourself from hepatitis A and B with the hepatitis A and B vaccines.** Getting infected with hepatitis A or B is especially harmful for people already infected with hepatitis C. Bring the coupon in this packet to Columbus Public Health for free hepatitis A and B vaccines.



**Eat a healthy diet.** Eat a healthy and balanced diet with a lot of vegetables and fruits. Try to stay away from too much salt, sugar and fat -- and drink plenty of water.



**Exercise and get enough rest.** Exercising and getting at least 8 hours of sleep a night will help you stay healthy.



**Talk to your doctor about your medications.** Some over the counter drugs, including Tylenol (acetaminophen) and Motrin (ibuprofen), can be damaging to the liver -- and many common opioid pain meds (like Vicodin and Percocet) contain them. If you regularly take pain medications or herbal supplements, let your provider know you have hepatitis C so he/she can help you make treatment choices that protect your liver's health.



**Get regular checkups.** It's important to have a primary health care provider for regular check-ups. Make sure to tell your doctor about any problems or symptoms you have.



**Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol is damaging to the liver and speeds the progression of hepatitis C related disease. Avoiding alcohol is an important step to protect your liver.



**Avoid recreational drugs.** Drug use is damaging to the liver. If you need to quit using drugs or alcohol, refer to the enclosed referral card. Columbus Public Health's walk-in assessment program can connect you to the resources you need to quit.



**Never share drug supplies.** Sharing drug equipment puts you at risk for spreading or getting hepatitis C and B or HIV. If you inject drugs, always use sterile needles, syringes and preparation equipment for each injection. And if you snort drugs, do not share straws.



**If you are getting a tattoo or piercing, go to a licensed business.** Getting a nonprofessional tattoo or piercing (at someone's home or a tattoo party) can put you at risk for spreading or getting hepatitis C and B or HIV.



**Practice safe sex.** Although less common, hepatitis C can be spread through sexual contact. Use condoms to prevent spreading or getting hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections such as hepatitis B, HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.







# Hepatitis B & C Treatment Specialists

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## **AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF)**

815 W. Broad St.-Suite 350, Columbus, 43222  
(614) 223-1532

## **Columbus VA, Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center**

Dr. Glen Borchers  
420 N. James Rd., Columbus, 43219  
(614) 388-7057  
*Patients must be veterans.*

## **Digestive Associates of Ohio**

700 E. Broad St.-2nd Floor, Columbus, 43215  
(614) 458-1183  
*Hep C only*

## **Equitas Health**

1033 N. High St., Columbus, 43215  
(614) 340-6777

## **Infectious Disease Consultants**

Dr. Thomas Keeling, Dr. Rodney Kusumi, Dr. James Smith and Dr. Julian Goodman  
685 Bryden Rd., Columbus, 43205  
(614) 461-3214

## **Mid Ohio Digestive Disease Associates**

99 N. Brice Rd.-Suite 100, Columbus, 43213  
1908 Tamarack Rd., Newark, 43055  
(614) 575-2600

## **Nationwide Children's Hospital: Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition**

700 Children's Dr., Columbus, 43205  
(614) 722-3450  
*Pediatric patients*

## **Ohio Gastroenterology Group, Inc.**

30 doctors in this practice  
3400 Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, 43202  
450 Alkyre Run Dr.-Suite 350, Columbus, 43082  
815 W. Broad St.-Suite 200, Columbus, 43222  
6670 Perimeter Dr.-Suite 200, Dublin, 43016  
85 McNaughten Rd.-Suite 320, Columbus, 43213  
(614) 754-5500

## **Ohio Health Gastroenterology Physicians**

Dr. Seth Levin and Dr. Sumit Kapoor  
5131 Beacon Hill Rd.-Suite 200, Columbus, 43228  
6905 Hospital Dr.-Suite 200, Dublin, 43016  
(614) 544-1891

## **The Ohio State University Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition**

Dr. Robert Kirkpatrick and Pam Kibbe, CNP  
410 W. 12th Ave., Columbus, 43210  
(614) 293-6255

## **OSU Wexner Medical Center Infectious Disease Clinic**

1581 Dodd Dr., McCampbell Hall, 4th Floor-Suite 400, Columbus, 43210  
(614) 293-4854

## **Pediatric Academic Association, Inc.**

Dr. Malvestutto  
555 S. 18th St.-Suite 5A, Columbus, 43205  
(614) 722-4450  
*Pediatric hep C patients only*

## **Victorian Village Family Health**

Brian Beesley, DO  
100 W. 3rd Ave.-Suite 250, Columbus, 43201  
(614) 299-2557

## **William Emlich, Jr., DO**

4930 W. Broad St.-Suite 1, Columbus, 43228  
210 Sharon Rd.-Suite 3, Circleville, 43113  
117 West High St.-Suite 108, London, 43140  
(614) 870-1234

*Most providers accept Medicare, Medicaid, some private insurance and self-pay patients. Call provider for more details.*







# Opiate Use Prevention

## What Is Addiction?

- **Addiction is a chronic, relapsing brain disease** that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences.
- **Drugs change the brain.** These changes can be long-lasting and can lead to the harmful behaviors seen in people who abuse drugs.

## What Are Opioids?

- **Opiates are drugs that depress or relax the activity of the nervous system** which decrease feelings of pain and effect breathing.
- **Opioids include drugs** such as heroin, oxycodone (Percocet, Percodan, OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Norco), fentanyl, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), buprenorphine (Subutex, Suboxone), codeine, methadone, morphine, and tramadol (Ultram).

## How Do You Know When You're Ready To Get Help?

- Have you ever felt you should cut down your use?
- Have you ever felt guilty or bad about using?
- Have you ever been in trouble with the law, at school or work due to your use?
- Has your drug use caused problems at home with your spouse/partner or family?

*If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, refer to the Treatment Options listed on the reverse side.*

## How To Help Others:

**An overdose is a medical emergency** and 911 should be called immediately.

### Signs Of An Overdose:

- Slow breathing (less than 1 breath every 5 seconds) or no breathing
- Vomiting
- Face is pale and clammy
- Blue lips, fingernails or toenails
- Slow, erratic or no pulse
- Snoring or gurgling noises while asleep or nodding off
- No response when you yell the person's name or rub the middle of their chest with your knuckles

### How To Respond To An Overdose:

- **Try to wake the person up** by yelling their name and rubbing the middle of their chest with your knuckles.
- **Call 911 and explain** that the person has stopped or is struggling to breathe.
- **Make sure nothing is in the person's mouth** that can block their breathing. If breathing has stopped or is very slow, begin rescue breathing.
- **If possible, administer naloxone** (Narcan).

## What Is Naloxone?

- **Naloxone is a medicine** commonly known as Narcan that can be used to **reverse an overdose** caused by opioid drugs.
- When given during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing.
- It can be given as an **injection** in a muscle or as a **nasal spray**.
- Naloxone works rapidly and will not harm the person receiving it.

## Treatment Options:

**Inpatient/Residential:** Involves an extended stay with detox and counseling for those in early recovery

**Outpatient Counseling:** Involves individual and group therapy

**Medical Intervention:** Uses medications to alleviate withdrawal symptoms and physical dependence combined with counseling

**Support Groups:** 12-step, peer-driven meetings for social support

## Local Resources:

**EMERGENCY:** 911

**Drug Addiction & Mental Health Crisis Hotline:**  
614-276-2273/netcareaccess.org

**Columbus Public Health Opiate Crisis Line:**  
614-724-HOPE (4673) (M-F, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.)

**Hands on Central Ohio:**  
211/handsoncentralohio.org

**Naloxone Kit: Southeast Medical Services**  
614-225-0990

**HIV & Hepatitis C Testing:**  
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Program at Columbus Public Health: 614-645-6893

**Syringe Access - SafePoint:**  
614-460-1406

### Additional Support:

**Narcotics Anonymous:**  
614-252-1700/nacentralohio.org

**Nar-Anon:** 614-470-3428/nar-anon.org

### More Information:

- adamhfranklin.org
- netcareaccess.org
- equitashealth.com
- columbus.gov/harm







# Sex & Hepatitis C

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## **Hepatitis C can be spread through sexual intercourse, but the risk is considered to be low.**

It is extremely rare among monogamous couples, meaning couples who only have sex with one another. The risk increases if you:

- Have multiple sex partners.
- Engage in rough sex.
- Have a sexually transmitted disease.
- Are infected with HIV.

There is no evidence that hepatitis C is spread by oral sex.

## **To reduce the chance of getting or giving hepatitis C through sexual contact, follow these guidelines:**

- Decrease the number of people with whom you have sex or have sex with only one person.
- Use latex condoms every time you have sex, particularly if you have:
  - More than one partner.
  - Rough sex that might make one of you bleed.
  - Sex during your or your partner's menstrual period.
  - Sex when you or your partner has an open sore on either of your genitals.

*Source: American Liver Foundation, [www.hepc.liverfoundation.org](http://www.hepc.liverfoundation.org)*

## Other Resources

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### Access to Health Care

#### **Bridge Program at Columbus Public Health**

Connects you to a family doctor at a PrimaryOne health provider.

Call to schedule an appointment: 614-645-1269

#### **Access to Health Insurance**

Help with enrolling in Medicaid or private health insurance through the health insurance marketplace.  
1-800-648-1176

[AreYouCovered.org](http://AreYouCovered.org)

### Hepatitis Specific Resources

#### **The American Liver Foundation**

800-465-4837

[www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

888-443-7232

[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)

#### **Help-4-Hep**

877-Help-4-Hep (877-435-7443)

[www.help4hep.org](http://www.help4hep.org)

#### **The Hepatitis C Support Project**

[www.HCVadvocate.org](http://www.HCVadvocate.org)

#### **The Hepatitis Foundation International**

800-891-0707

[www.hepfi.org](http://www.hepfi.org)

### Syringe Access & Harm Reduction

#### **Safe Point (operated by Equitas Health)**

Educating the community about safer drug use, fighting the spread of infectious disease, and providing drug treatment enrollment.

614-460-1406

[www.safepointohio.org](http://www.safepointohio.org)

Services Offered:

- Syringe access & safer injection use education
- HIV/STI/Hepatitis C testing and care
- Drug intervention treatment & counseling
- Overdose prevention education

Locations & Hours:

- Equitas Health (Short North)  
1033 N. High St.  
Tuesday: 3–5:30 p.m.  
Saturday: 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
- Southeast, Inc. (Franklin Station)  
524 B W. Broad St.  
Friday: 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.



