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The Basics: Hepatitis C

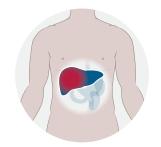
Hepatitis C is a serious infection caused by a virus. It damages the liver, which performs essential functions in the body.

The first six months of having hepatitis C are called 'acute infection'. Most people don't notice any symptoms.

During this time, the body can sometimes get rid of the virus on its own. In this case, treatment wouldn't be needed.

If you have had hepatitis C for more than six months, this is called 'chronic infection'.

You may not notice any symptoms for several years as hepatitis C develops slowly.



You can reduce damage to your liver by avoiding alcohol and recreational drugs.



When your liver is damaged it becomes is hard and scarred. This can make you feel unwell.

Moderate scarring is called 'fibrosis'.

More serious scarring is called 'cirrhosis'.



The aim of treatment is to cure you of hepatitis C. You usually need to take it for 6, 12 or 18 months.

But hepatitis C treatment doesn't work for everybody.



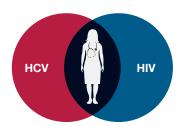




New, better drugs are being developed and are starting to be used.



Having HIV makes hepatitis C more serious and harder to treat. Make sure your doctors are experienced in treating HIV and hepatitis C together.



Important points:

- Hepatitis C is a serious infection which damages the liver.
- Some people have hepatitis C for many years without feeling unwell or having any symptoms.
- If hepatitis C treatment works, it will cure you of hepatitis C.

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