What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus. The virus is found in the blood of people who have this virus and is spread by contact with infected blood.

This virus eventually prevents blood from flowing freely in the liver. Many people with Hepatitis C have no symptoms at all but some will notice mild to severe symptoms such as: "flu-like" symptoms, abdominal discomfort, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, weight loss, and sometimes yellowing of the skin and eyes.

Why should I be tested?

If you test positive for Hepatitis C, it is very likely that you have chronic (long-term) liver disease. Early diagnosis is important so that you can be checked for liver damage and receive treatment if you need it. Treatment is most effective before severe liver damage has occurred. You can also learn how you can protect your liver from further harm and how you can prevent the spread of HCV to other people. Contact your doctor or Jefferson County Public Health for more information.

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Resources

Hepatitis C Connection:
www.hepc-connection.org
1-800-522-HEPC

American Liver Foundation
www.liverfoundation.org
1-800-465-4837

Colorado Department of Health & Environment - Immunization Program
www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/Hepatitis
303-692-2650

Jefferson County Public Health

Arvada Lakewood

Edgewater Golden

(303) 232-6301

jeffco.us/public-health

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Hepatitis

Are you at risk? Should you be tested?

Jefferson County Public Health

303-232-6301
jeffco.us/public-health

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Risk Factors

Have you:

- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to 1992 (includes receiving blood while giving birth or during other surgical procedures)?
- Been treated for clotting problems with a blood product made before 1987?
- Received long-term hemodialysis?
- Ever injected or snorted drugs - even once?
- Had an occupational needle stick?
- Had persistently abnormal liver function/enzyme levels?
- Shared a razor, nail file/clipper, toothbrush?
- Had a tattoo, manicure, pedicure, electrolysis, or body/ears pierced?
- Had multiple sex partners?

If so, you may have been exposed to the Hepatitis C virus. You may or may NOT have symptoms.

How Can I Protect Myself From Getting Hepatitis C?

- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after blood exposure. Wash blood-contaminated surfaces with soap and water and then disinfect with a bleach and water solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

- Practice safer sex by using latex condoms.
- Healthcare professionals should always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps.
- Injection drug users should make sure that needles, syringes and works are sterile and never shared. Never draw drugs out of a supply that has been mixed in a shared and possibly contaminated container.
- When getting a tattoo or body piercing, make sure the artist uses sterile needles, tools and ink and follows good health practices.
- Do not share personal items that may have your blood on them such as razors, nail files and toothbrushes.

Where can I get more information on testing?

Call Jefferson County Public Health at 303-232-6301 for:

- √ Information on testing for HIV & Hepatitis C
- √ Recommendations on vaccines that help protect people with Hepatitis C infection
- √ Current resources for Hepatitis C information and support