

KNOW THE RISKS OF THIS SILENT LIVER DISEASE,
AND ITS DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

Hepatitis C CLINIC



Many people who are infected with the Hepatitis C virus do not know they are infected. It can remain silent for years until the virus damages the liver enough to cause the signs and symptoms of liver disease. Whether it remains in the body for a few weeks (acute) or develops into a chronic disease, symptoms of Hepatitis C may include bleeding and bruising easily, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, itchy skin, joint pain, weight loss, jaundice, spider-like blood vessels on your skin, confusion, drowsiness and slurred speech.

Chronic Hepatitis C is a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems, including liver damage, liver failure, liver cancer or even death. It is the most common reason for liver transplantation in the United States. Of every 100 people infected with the Hepatitis C virus, about 75-80 people will develop chronic Hepatitis C virus infection; 60-70 of those people will go on to develop chronic liver disease; 20-50 of those people will develop cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver over a period of 20-30 years; and 1-5 will die from cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Hepatitis C infection is a contagious disease that may last a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness that attacks the liver. Exposure to Hepatitis C virus is primarily through contact with the blood of an infected person through sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Prior to 1992 when widespread screening of the blood supply began in the United States, Hepatitis C was commonly spread through blood transfusions and organ transplants. There is no vaccine against Hepatitis C infection.

Diagnosis of the virus typically comes from routine blood tests to measure liver function and the level of proteins and enzymes produced by the liver.

However, liver enzyme levels can fluctuate giving a false indication. Actual diagnosis may require testing several times during a six to twelve month period to determine the presence of the virus.

Talk to your medical provider about being tested for Hepatitis C if you were born between 1945 and 1965, have history of injecting or inhaling illicit drugs, have been diagnosed with HIV, received clotting factor concentrates before 1987, received blood transfusions or organ transplant before 1992, received a piercing or tattoo in an unclean environment using unsterile equipment, have had abnormal liver tests or liver disease, or work in the healthcare or public safety environment and have been exposed to blood products.

Randall Roark, PhD, MPH, FNP-BC, manages the course of treatment for Hepatitis C patients at the Morongo Basin Community Health Center.



“Today, chronic Hepatitis C disease is usually curable with an oral medication regimen” says Roark. “I work closely with my patients to ensure the best possible outcome for each individual.”

Roark is now seeing patients at the new Hepatitis C clinic at Morongo Basin Community Health Center in Yucca Valley. Call for an appointment at 760-365-9305.