# ∩ిిట\_ుిరో C | Hepatitis C

Qulliq is an Inuit oil lamp that heats our bodies to maintain a healthy immune system. Just like the qulliq, this website helps us understand, in Inuktitut, the importance of taking care of ourselves, our families and our communities. We discuss these health issues so that we can all learn more and seek help, especially when it is not easy to talk about.

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#### Introduction

- Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver. When left untreated, hepatitis C can lead to serious health problems such as liver failure, liver cancer and early death. The good news is that hepatitis C can be cured!
- Hepatitis C is passed when blood from a person with hepatitis C gets into the blood of someone without hepatitis C. There are many ways to prevent getting or passing hepatitis C.
- The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested.

Read on for answers to common questions about hepatitis C.

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# What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver, an organ that performs many important functions for the body. The liver is essential to good health.

If left untreated, hepatitis C injures the liver over time. This can lead to serious health problems such as liver failure, liver cancer and early death. However, hepatitis C can be cured.

## How does someone get hepatitis C and how can this be prevented?

Hepatitis C is passed when blood from a person with hepatitis C gets into the blood of someone without hepatitis C.

In Canada, hepatitis C is commonly passed through sharing drug use equipment, especially injection drug use equipment.

Hepatitis C can also be passed:

- through reusing unsterilized tattooing or body piercing equipment
- from a pregnant parent to a child during pregnancy or childbirth
- during sex (while the risk is very low, it is possible; this is more common among men who have sex with men)

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• through sharing personal care items like razors, nail clippers and toothbrushes

Hepatitis C can no longer be passed through donated blood or tissue in Canada. Canada started testing donated blood and tissue for hepatitis C in 1992.

Hepatitis C is never passed by hugging, kissing or touching someone who has the virus.

There is no vaccine for hepatitis C so it's important to do what you can to prevent getting hepatitis C. There are many ways to prevent hepatitis C:

- If you inject drugs, avoid sharing by using new equipment every time you inject drugs.
- If you smoke or snort drugs, avoid sharing by using your own equipment every time you smoke or snort.
- Use condoms the right way each time you have sex.
- Get tested, treated and cured before becoming pregnant. This will prevent passing hepatitis C to your baby.

### How do I know if I have hepatitis C?

Most people who have hepatitis C do not

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have any symptoms for many years, even though the virus is active and injuring their liver. You can have hepatitis C and not know it. There is no mandatory hepatitis C testing when people apply for permanent residency in Canada.

The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested.

Ask a healthcare provider for a hepatitis C test. You may want to also get tested for other infections at the same time, like gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis.

#### Can hepatitis C be cured?

Hepatitis C can be cured! For some people the virus will go away on its own within the first six months, but most people need treatment to cure the infection.

Hepatitis C treatment has come a long way. It involves taking treatment for eight or 12 weeks and cures almost everyone with hepatitis C with few, if any, side effects.

If you have hepatitis C, speak to a healthcare provider about your treatment options. The earlier treatment is started the better it is for your health.

#### Can I get hepatitis C again?

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you immune. You can get hepatitis C again if you come into contact with blood containing hepatitis C again.

The good news is that it can be treated and cured again!

#### What are hepatitis A and B?

Hepatitis A and B are different from hepatitis C

Hepatitis A is usually passed through water or food contaminated with fecal matter (poo). It can also be passed through close contact with someone who has hepatitis A. Most people who get hepatitis A recover from it on their own. When this happens, they are immune to the virus and cannot get hepatitis A again.

Hepatitis B can be passed from one person to another through blood, semen or vaginal fluid. Hepatitis B can also be passed to a baby during childbirth. Most people who get hepatitis B recover on their own; after this, they cannot get hepatitis B again. However, some people with hepatitis B develop a chronic hepatitis B infection. This is more common in people who get hepatitis B when young. Chronic hepatitis B can lead to long-term liver problems. There is no cure for hepatitis B.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent both hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

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Where can I get hepatitis C services?

Speak to a healthcare provider about hepatitis C testing or to receive treatment and care for hepatitis C.

Find hepatitis C services in your area at https://whereto.catie.ca.

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