

Hep C Support

If we are diagnosed with Hep C it is important that we do what we can to help ourselves stay as healthy as possible.

If we can stay away from alcohol and other drugs, it will help reduce and slow down the damage that could be caused by the virus.

If we can drink water with lemon in it every day, that helps our liver to detox from the virus. If we can eat foods that are easy for our liver to breakdown, it can help us to increase our health.

Complementary therapies, like acupuncture, are recommended to help with recovery.

Emotional Health

Hep C is a slow developing virus, so it is usual for test results and appointments to take a long time to be confirmed.

Sometimes waiting for information can be stressful. If we can talk to someone about how we are feeling, it can help us to deal with this stress.

We might find that we worry about our family, our work or our future. Talking with someone else who is living with Hep C can help us to feel less isolated.

There is a Hep C peer support group, and a Hep C professional network, in Limerick city, for the Mid West Region.

Contact Billie at GOSHH for more information.

Hep C Testing

If we know we are living with Hep C then we can do what we need to do, to stay healthy.

Getting a Hep C test is free to everyone, at all STI clinics (regardless of whether we have a medical card or not).

Contact GOSHH for support or information about Hep C testing options. We give out free condoms as well.

USEFUL NUMBERS:

STI CLINIC
(Ennis, Limerick, Nenagh)
061 482 382
theclinic@hse.ie

ANA LIFFEY DRUGS PROJECT LIMERICK
085 155 9158

LIMERICK DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICE
061 318 633

Redwood Place,
18 Davis Street,
Limerick
061 314 354

support@goshh.ie
www.goshh.ie



**What Hep C is,
what Hep C does,
and other things you
might like to know.**



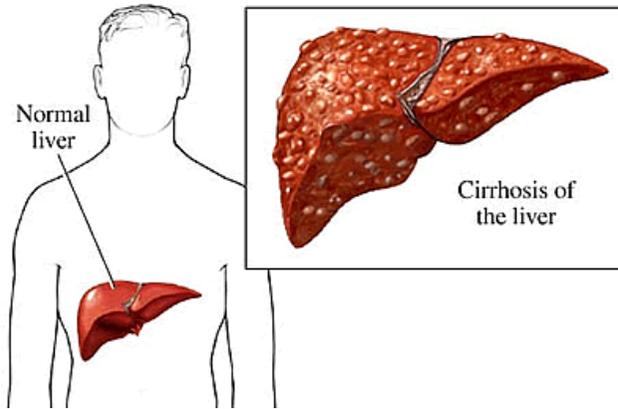
**Hepatitis C
Information
Leaflet**

Hepatitis C, Hep C or HCV

Hepatitis C is a virus. It is known by medical professionals as HCV and is commonly called 'Hep C'.

Hep C lives in our blood and affects our liver by causing swelling and eventually scarring. This stops the liver from working properly.

Hep C targets our liver. It takes along time for Hep C to damage our liver and, given the opportunity, our liver can repair itself so it is possible to recover from Hep C.



Our liver is an important part of our body. It helps to clean our blood, break down food and store energy. If we are living with Hep C, we may find we get tired, confused, sore, itchy and hot.

If we are drinking alcohol, taking other types of drugs, or already living with HIV, the damage done by the Hep C virus is likely to develop more quickly.

We can live with Hep C for many years without knowing it.

Hep C Transmission

Hep C is mainly transmitted when infected blood from someone else, gets into our body. The most common way is through sharing injecting equipment (works) during drug use.

It is also possible that Hep C could be transmitted during:

- Sharing snorts
- Tattoos and piercings
- Blood transfusions
- Mother to baby
- Sex



Most of the time it is very difficult to determine where our Hep C has come from or how long we may have been living with it.

There are many ways people's blood can mix, and get into and out of each others bodies.

Some things we need to be aware of are:

- If Hep C is present in a our body then it is also present in the menstrual (period) blood
- Always use sterile works if possible
- If we are having tattoos or piercings, we can ask the person what they do to guarantee safety. Make sure they use sterile equipment and gloves, have good hygiene, and dispose of all needles straight away
- Hep C cannot get through skin

Hep C cannot be transmitted by hugging, sharing cups, sleeping in the same bed, kissing, tickling, massaging, talking, drinking, smoking or sharing a space with someone.

Hep C Treatment

1 in 5 people who are living with Hep C will clear the virus without any treatment. This is because some of us can fight the virus off naturally. If we 'clear the virus', we are no longer living with Hep C, unless we contract it again.

For those people that do not clear the virus, Hep C medication is available. This medication is free whether we have a medical card or not. The medication helps us to clear the virus.

Not everyone needs treatment. In order to figure out if a person needs treatment the liver will be scanned to see how healthy it is. If the Hep C has caused a certain amount of damage, medication may be offered.

There are currently 2 types of Hep C medication:

- Injections
- Tablets

The injections are interferon and ribavirin. These may cause side effects and some people have found it difficult to complete the course. Depending on the type of Hep C we have these injections help about 50% of people to clear the virus.

The tablets are a new treatment that is sometimes available to those who have tried the injections, or for whom the injections would not be suitable. These are taken once a day for 12 weeks and help about 90—100% of people to clear the virus.