



Hepatitis C: Are You at Risk?

"The good news is that Hep C treatment is easier and shorter than ever before"

If you were born between 1945 - 1965, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend you get tested for [hepatitis C](#), the most common blood-borne infection in the country. For reasons not fully understood, 75% of people with hepatitis C are baby boomers born between 1945-1965, and many don't even know that they have the virus.

The hepatitis C virus (HCV) is primarily spread through contact with blood from an infected person. It is thought that many baby boomers became infected from contaminated blood products before screening procedures were implemented in 1992, from sharing needles, or from medical equipment or procedures before universal precautions and infection control procedures were widely adopted. Transmission through sexual contact is believed to be low.

Hepatitis C is often described as acute or chronic. Acute hepatitis C can be a short-term illness that occurs within six months of exposure to the virus. If untreated, it often leads to chronic hepatitis C, meaning lifelong infection. The person may live for decades without symptoms, but the virus can eventually cause serious health problems, including damage to the liver, cirrhosis, and liver cancer. Other individuals [at risk](#) for hepatitis C include:

- Current or former injection drug users, and those who use drugs snorted through the nose
- Recipients of blood transfusions or organ transplants prior to 1992, and recipients of clotting factor concentrates before 1987
- Long-term hemodialysis patients
- Health care workers exposed to needle sticks involving blood from an infected person
- People infected with HIV
- Children born to mothers with hepatitis C
- People in jail or prisons
- People who get tattoos under unsanitary conditions

Screening and Treatment

A [blood test](#) can determine if a person has ever been infected with the virus. If the blood test shows exposure to the virus, an additional follow-up test is needed to show if the person is currently infected.

While there is no vaccine for hepatitis C, treatment involving a combination of medications can cure most people. "Hep C treatment is easier and shorter than ever before," stated Juan Laboy, Medical Practice Manager at InterCommunity. "Many people who have HCV decline treatment because they think it's like the treatment given years ago that was similar to chemotherapeutic medication. Now, 99% of HCV positive patients - before cirrhosis - can be cured."

If you, or someone you know, is interested in primary care, addiction recovery services, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.

