

HEP C

RESOURCE  
GUIDE



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH SERVICES

*Last Updated: June 2020*

# Hepatitis C Facts

## The Basics

### *What is hepatitis C?*

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a viral disease that affects the liver and can cause chronic liver disease. Surveys conducted 2013-2016 indicated an estimated 2.4 million persons (1.0%) in the nation were living with hepatitis C.

### *What are the Symptoms?*

People with newly acquired HCV infection usually are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms. Yellowing of skin (jaundice) might occur in 20%–30% of persons, and nonspecific symptoms (e.g., discomfort, or abdominal pain) might be present in 10%–20% of persons. It can take many years from the time a person is infected with the virus before symptoms like extreme fatigue, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer or liver failure occur.

### **Out of 100 adults infected with hepatitis C...**

**75-80** develop chronic hepatitis C

**60-70** develop chronic liver disease

**5-20** develop cirrhosis

**1-5** die from liver disease or cancer

If you've tested positive for hepatitis C or think you are at risk, seek care right away to help prevent these complications.

## Infection Facts

### *How is hepatitis C transmitted?*

Hepatitis C is mainly spread through blood which might happen by:

- Receiving blood transfusions, organ transplants or blood products before donor screening procedures were in place (1992).
- Using IV drugs and sharing needles and syringes.
- Birth when a mother is infected with HCV.
- Needlestick injuries in health care settings

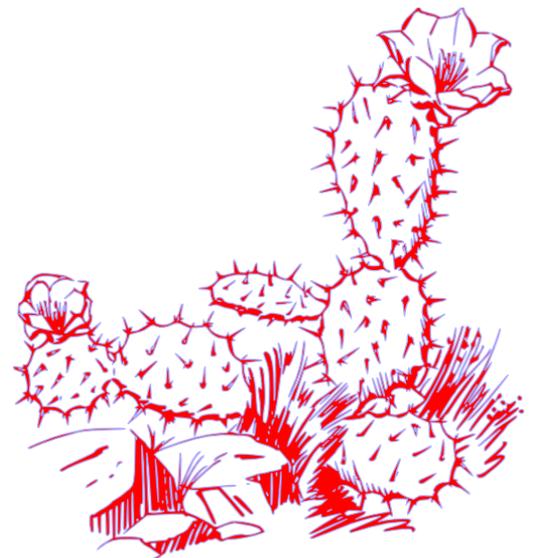
Although infrequent, HCV can also be spread through:

- Using unclean needles for tattoos or body piercings.
- Having sex with someone who has hepatitis C.

### *What are some ways hepatitis C is NOT transmitted?*

Hepatitis C is not spread in food or water. You also cannot get hepatitis C by:

- Sneezing or coughing
- Hugging
- Touching or shaking hands
- Kissing
- Sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses



# Testing & Treatment

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## Screening for Hepatitis C

### Hepatitis C Antibody Test

The first screening test is usually a hepatitis C antibody test. If the antibody test is positive, it means that you may have been exposed to the hepatitis C virus at some point in your life. The antibody test does not show whether or not you still have the virus in your body. For some people (about 15-25%), the body's natural defenses get rid of the virus while others will continue to carry the virus in their bodies. An additional RNA test is needed to confirm a positive hepatitis C antibody test result. It can take up to 6 months for hepatitis C antibodies to be detected in the blood, so a negative antibody test does not always mean you are negative for the virus. If you tested negative, but think you could have been infected in the last 6 months, you should wait 6 months and repeat the test again.

## Confirming Hepatitis C

### RNA (or PCR) Test

If you have a positive hepatitis C antibody test, the next step is to see a doctor to confirm the diagnosis with a test that detects the virus itself. This test is called a RNA test or PCR test. If this test is positive, you should see a doctor for hepatitis C care and treatment.

## Treatment for Hepatitis C

While there is no vaccine for hepatitis C, there are several medications to treat hepatitis C that are highly effective and have fewer side effects than previous options. **Hepatitis C can be cured** through treatment with a provider. Based on your medical history, physical exam, laboratory and other test results, your health care provider will suggest which medications are right for you. This decision will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The type of hepatitis C you have (called a "genotype").
- Whether or not you have liver disease (cirrhosis), and if the disease is mild (compensated) or severe (decompensated).
- If you've received treatment before and which medications were used.
- Other health conditions you may have.

Treatment regimens are usually 8 or 12 weeks, but sometimes longer.

### Sources:

American Liver Foundation - <https://liverfoundation.org/for-patients/about-the-liver/diseases-of-the-liver/hepatitis-c/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/hcvfaq.htm>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCGettingTested.pdf>

# Staying Healthy with Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C affects the liver, the largest internal organ with many important functions. Here are the top 10 ways for you to stay healthy:



**Protect yourself from hepatitis A and B** with the hepatitis A and B vaccines. Getting infected with hepatitis A or B is especially harmful for people already infected with hepatitis C.



**Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol is damaging to the liver and speeds the progression of hepatitis C related disease. Avoiding alcohol is an important step to protect your liver.



**Eat a healthy diet.** Eat a healthy and balanced diet with a lot of vegetables and fruits. Try to stay away from too much salt, sugar and fat -- and drink plenty of water.



**Avoid recreational drugs.** Drug use is damaging to the liver. If you need to quit using drugs or alcohol, refer to the enclosed referral card.



**Exercise and get enough rest.** Exercising and getting at least 8 hours of sleep a night will help you stay healthy.



**Never share drug supplies.** Sharing drug equipment puts you at risk for spreading or getting hepatitis C and B or HIV. If you inject drugs, always use sterile needles, syringes and preparation equipment for each injection. And if you snort drugs, do not share straws.



**Talk to your doctor about your medications.** Some over the counter drugs, including Tylenol (acetaminophen) and Motrin (ibuprofen), can be damaging to the liver -- and many common opioid pain meds (like Vicodin and Percocet) contain them. If you regularly take pain medications or herbal supplements, let your provider know you have hepatitis C so he/she can help you make treatment choices that protect your liver's health.



**If you are getting a tattoo or piercing, go to a licensed business.** Getting a nonprofessional tattoo or piercing can put you at risk for spreading or getting hepatitis C and B or HIV.



**Get regular checkups.** It's important to have a primary health care provider for regular check-ups. Make sure to tell your doctor about any problems or symptoms you have.



**Practice safe sex.** Although less common, hepatitis C can be spread through sexual contact. Use condoms to prevent spreading or getting hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections such as hepatitis B, HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.

Sources:

City of Columbus Public Health; Hepatitis C Support Project/HCV Advocate, by Alan Franciscus; [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org)

# Looking for hepatitis C Testing?

As of April 2020, a **once per lifetime hepatitis C test is now recommended for adults ages 18 years of age and older** by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This guide includes information about where to get tested for hepatitis C, how to access medical care and resources. Please forward updates, changes and questions about this guide to:

**Arlis Jenkins, MPH**  
*Arlis.Jenkins@azdhs.gov*  
(602) 478-6791

If you do not have a primary care provider, see below to find local testing and services:

## [Contact Your Local Health Department](#)

[Sliding Fee Schedule Clinics](#): Sliding Fee Schedule Clinics offer discounted fees for services to persons without health insurance.

[Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers](#): The Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) has many programs to assist member community health centers and disadvantaged populations. Arizona currently has 21 Health Center Grantees and 2 Look-Alikes.

[Community Information and Referral Services](#): Community Information and Referral Services links individuals and families to vital community services throughout Arizona.

[Arizona Medical Board, Doctor Search](#): Doctor search from the Arizona Medical Board

[Maricopa County Medical Society](#): Doctor search for physician members of the Maricopa County Medical Society

[Find Help Phoenix](#): Find low cost services in Maricopa County.

**Want to Learn More? Click [here](#). Also visit <http://www.HepCAZ.org>**

## Low Cost Testing Sites

These sites provide low cost hepatitis C testing. The test (called an HCV antibody test) screens patients who have not already tested positive for hepatitis C.

### **Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation**

375 S Euclid Ave  
Tucson, AZ 85719  
(520) 628-7223

<https://www.saaaf.org/>

### **Southwest Recovery Alliance**

Phoenix: [info@southwestrecoveryalliance.org](mailto:info@southwestrecoveryalliance.org)

<http://southwestrecoveryalliance.org/>

### **Terros Health**

333 E Indian School Rd  
Phoenix, AZ 85012  
(602) 302-7834

<https://www.terroshealth.org/>

### **Sonoran Prevention Works**

Phoenix: 480-442-7086

Tucson: 520-442-7688

Prescott: 928-514-0523

<https://spwaz.org/>

### **Maricopa County Public Health Clinic**

1645 E Roosevelt St,  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
(602) 506-1678

<https://www.maricopa.gov/2022/Testing>

### **North Country HealthCare**

<https://northcountryhealthcare.org/>

## Primary Care Providers – Hepatitis C Testing & Treatment

This category lists health care organizations that provide services for people at risk for or living with hepatitis C where both routine testing and treatment are provided within the same organization.

Name/Contact Information	Locations	Hepatitis A & B Vaccination	Sliding Fee Scale
<b>Adelante Healthcare</b> <a href="http://www.adelantehealthcare.com">www.adelantehealthcare.com</a>	Wickenburg Phoenix Gila Bend Goodyear Mesa Peoria Surprise Buckeye		
<b>Canyonlands Healthcare</b> <a href="http://www.canyonlandschc.org">www.canyonlandschc.org</a>	Beaver Dam Chilchinbeto Clifton Duncan Globe Page Safford		
<b>Community Medical Services</b> <a href="http://www.communitymedicalservices.org">www.communitymedicalservices.org</a>	Tucson		
<b>El Rio Health</b> <a href="http://www.elrio.org">www.elrio.org</a>	Tucson		
<b>NOAH Clinics</b> <a href="http://www.noahhelps.org">www.noahhelps.org</a>	Phoenix Scottsdale Glendale		
<b>North Country HealthCare</b> <a href="http://www.northcountryhealthcare.org/">www.northcountryhealthcare.org/</a>	Ash Fork, Grand Canyon, Lake Havasu, Seligman, Winslow , Bullhead, Holbrook , Payson, Show Low, Flagstaff, Kingman, Round Valley, Williams		
<b>Phoenix Indian Medical Center</b> <a href="http://www.ihs.gov/phoenix/healthcarefacilities/phoenix/">www.ihs.gov/phoenix/healthcarefacilities/phoenix/</a>	Phoenix		
<b>Terros Health</b> <a href="http://www.terroshealth.org/">www.terroshealth.org/</a>	Phoenix Tempe Mesa Glendale		
<b>Valle del Sol</b> <a href="http://www.valledelsol.com/">www.valledelsol.com/</a>	Phoenix Avondale Mesa		
<b>Valleywise Health</b> <a href="http://www.valleywisehealth.org/">www.valleywisehealth.org/</a>	Phoenix El Mirage Mesa Guadalupe Chandler Glendale Avondale		

## Specialty Care Providers – Hepatitis C Treatment

This category lists information about specialized health care organizations that provide treatment for hepatitis C and related liver disease.

Name/Contact Information	Locations
<b>Arizona Liver Health</b> <a href="http://www.azliver.com/">www.azliver.com/</a>	Chandler Glendale Tucson
<b>Banner Health/JA Thomas D. Boyer Liver Institute</b> <a href="http://www.bannerhealth.org">www.bannerhealth.org</a>	Phoenix Tucson
<b>Dignity Health</b> <a href="http://www.dignityhealth.org">www.dignityhealth.org</a>	Phoenix
<b>Honor Health</b> <a href="http://www.honorhealth.org">www.honorhealth.org</a>	Scottsdale
<b>Kingman Regional Medical Center</b> <a href="http://www.azkrmc.com">www.azkrmc.com</a>	Kingman
<b>Native Health</b> <a href="http://www.nativehealthphoenix.org/">www.nativehealthphoenix.org/</a>	Phoenix
<b>Petersen Clinics</b> <a href="http://www.hiv.medicine.arizona.edu/">www.hiv.medicine.arizona.edu/</a>	Tucson
<b>Phoenix Indian Medical Center</b> <a href="http://www.hiv.medicine.arizona.edu/">www.hiv.medicine.arizona.edu/</a>	Phoenix
<b>Spectrum Medical</b> <a href="http://www.spectrummedgroup.com">www.spectrummedgroup.com</a>	Phoenix
<b>Valleywise Health</b> <a href="http://www.valleywisehealth.org">www.valleywisehealth.org</a>	Phoenix El Mirage Mesa Guadalupe Chandler Glendale Avondale

## Treatment Assistance

A variety of assistance programs are available to help you with treatment costs.

[NASTAD List of Patient Assistance Programs](#): The National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), which is a non-profit national association that represents public health officials who administer HIV and hepatitis health care, prevention, education, and supportive service programs.

[American Liver Foundation Drug Discount Card](#): The American Liver Foundation provides the free Drug Discount Card for uninsured and underinsured patients and their families.

[NeedyMeds](#): NeedyMeds is a national organization that maintains a website of free information of local Arizona programs that help people who can't afford medications and healthcare costs.

[RxAssist Directory of Patient Assistance Programs](#): RxAssist offers a database of patient assistance programs so that patients can find the information they need.

[Partnership for Prescription Assistance](#): The Partnership for Prescription Assistance helps qualifying patients, without prescription drug coverage, receive the medications they need for free or nearly free.

[ADAP Treatment Coverage](#): The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) may cover the cost of hep C treatment for People Living with HIV after payor of last resort verification.

## Health Insurance Enrollment Assistance

If you are uninsured, you may qualify for health insurance available through the [Affordable Care Act](#). The following resources can help you understand your options and enroll in an insurance plan.

[Healthcare.gov](#): The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services website for health insurance coverage.

[CoverAZ Marketplace Health Insurance Navigators and Assisters](#): Cover Arizona is a statewide coalition that is committed to increasing health coverage. Find a navigator or assister to help you with your health insurance application.

[Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System](#): Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is Arizona's Medicaid agency that offers health care programs to serve Arizona residents. Individuals must meet certain income and other requirements to obtain services.

[Arizona Healthy Aging](#): The Arizona Department of Health Services' Healthy Aging website provides health insurance resources.

[First Things First Health Links](#): First Things First links today's families to a healthy tomorrow. First Things First can help you apply for AHCCCS, Marketplace, and link you to other needed services.

[Asian Pacific Community in Action](#): The Asian Pacific Community in Action targets the health related needs of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander individuals and families residing in Arizona. APCA staff and professional medical interpreters provide services, including health insurance navigation and other resources.

[Keogh Health Connection](#): Keogh Health Connection connects people who surviving on little income, usually women and their children who are seeking healthcare and other resources.

[Helping Families In Need](#): Helping Families In Need has agreements with local governments and other partners to provide services free of charge to eligible families.

## Support Services

### *National Support Resources*

[Help4Hep](#): Help-4-Hep is a non-profit, peer-to-peer helpline where counselors work with patients to meet the challenges of hepatitis C head-on. Callers talk one-to-one with a real person, typically someone who's had hepatitis C. Call toll-free: **877-Help-4-Hep** (877-435-7443).

[Hepatitis C Careline](#): Patient Advocate Foundation's Hepatitis C CareLine is a patient/provider hotline designed to provide assistance to patients who have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C and are seeking education and access to care. Call the Hepatitis C CareLine team at **1-800-532-5274**.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Viral Hepatitis](#)

[CDC Know More Hepatitis](#)

[American Liver Foundation](#)

[Veteran Resources – Viral Hepatitis](#)

[Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program](#)