

HEPATITIS C & THE HISPANIC PATIENT FACT SHEET

What is hepatitis C?

Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is a potentially serious disease that, if left untreated, can damage the liver over time and lead to cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease and liver cancer. Liver failure from chronic HCV infection is the leading cause of liver transplants in the United States.

Hepatitis literally means inflammation of the liver. As damage and scarring progresses, it becomes harder for the liver to work properly. Some people may begin to experience symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Muscle and joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine

Are you at risk?

Many people infected with chronic hepatitis C do not know that they have the virus – approximately 70 to 80 percent of people newly infected with the virus do not have symptoms. In many people with hepatitis C, signs or symptoms may not appear for years.

Anyone can get chronic hepatitis C if they come in contact with an infected person's blood. This can happen from:

- Sharing a razor or toothbrush with someone who has hepatitis C
- Sharing piercing or tattoo tools (contaminated needles/ink)
- Receiving blood products for hemophilia before 1987
- Receiving a blood transfusion before 1992
- Sharing needles with someone infected with hepatitis C
- Having unprotected sex with someone who is infected with hepatitis C
- Being born to a mother with hepatitis C

The prevalence of HCV is disproportionately high among Hispanic Americans. Of the approximately 3.2 million Americans who have chronic hepatitis C, an estimated one million are Hispanic. Research has shown that:

- Complications due to chronic HCV develop more quickly and result in more health issues in Hispanics compared with other ethnic groups.
- The number of deaths from cirrhosis due to complications from chronic hepatitis C is more than twice as high in Hispanics compared with non-Hispanic white people.

Hispanics are less likely than non-Hispanic whites to be tested for chronic HCV, even when there are known risk factors.

What you can do.

There are a variety of tests used to diagnose HCV infection. Speak with your doctor about getting tested, as routine blood analyses may not test for HCV infection. If you know you have hepatitis C, talk to your doctor about ways you can help manage your condition. He or she may suggest making lifestyle changes to help your body, such as:

- Eating healthier; cutting back on fatty and salty foods
- Exercising and keeping an active lifestyle
- Maintaining a healthy body weight
- Avoiding alcohol consumption

Your doctor may also suggest treatment options to help manage your chronic hepatitis C.

Make today your day to take action. Doing nothing is not an option. Learn more at www.TuneInToHepC.com

