Facts and Myths About How Hep C is Transmitted

May 12, 2021 By Connie M. Welch

The most dangerous thing you can do about Hep C is assume. The best approach is not to jump to conclusions or myths but find out the facts about how Hep C is and is not transmitted. The facts not only serve to help those with Hep C but also to help inform those who do not have Hep C.

The truth about how Hep C is NOT spread

Hep C cannot be spread by kissing, hugging, cooking, sharing eating utensils, holding hands, coughing or sneezing, close contact with someone with Hep C or taking care of someone with Hep C unless blood contact directly. It is also not spread through food or water.

Facts about transmitting Hep C sexually

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that the Hepatitis C virus can be passed during sexual contact, yet it is a low risk if a person has one, long-term steady sexual partner. However, having multiple sex partners, or HIV, or engaging in rough sex can increase the risk of spreading the virus during sex. Prevent transmitting Hep C sexually by practicing safe sex.

Facts about transmitting Hep C to your baby through pregnancy or breast feeding

It is possible to transmit Hep C to your baby though the risk of transmission is believed to be low, with 3 to 5% risk according to World Journal of Gastroenterology. About 4 out of 100 infants born to mothers with HCV become infected with Hep C. If a Mother has HIV and HCV they have a 20% higher risk of transmitting to their baby.

Hep C is not transmitted by breastfeeding. However, women who have cracked or bleeding nipples are advised to stop breastfeeding until the nipple is healed and no longer bleeding. Be sure to be examined by your physician and be advised on when to resume breastfeeding.

Steps to prevent transmitting Hep C

*Do not share personal items with others like razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers or other personal items.

*Wear latex gloves when you are helping someone dress an open wound.

*Use recommended safety measures if you are exposed to blood or needle sticks.

*Do not share needles

*Practice safe sex

*Use clean needles and equipment for tattoos or body piercings.

*Cover a cut, wound or sore with a clean sterile bandage immediately. It's a good idea to keep Band-Aids in your wallet or purse in case you get cut away from home.

*Clean all surfaces thoroughly after they have come in contact with blood. The CDC recommends for any blood spills, including dried blood, which can still be infectious, should be cleaned using a dilution of one part household bleach to 10 parts water. Gloves should be worn with cleaning up blood spills. The Hep C virus can survive outside the body at room temperature, on environmental surfaces, for up to 3 weeks.

Take Care of Your Liver: Avoid Drinking Alcohol

The American Liver Foundation states that alcohol can damage or destroy liver cells. Liver damage can lead to the buildup of fat in your liver (fatty liver), inflammation or swelling of your liver (alcoholic hepatitis), and/or scarring of your liver (cirrhosis). For people with liver disease, even a small amount of alcohol can make the disease worse. A good analogy is to think of hepatitis as a smoldering fire. Alcohol is like gasoline. Don't throw gasoline on the fire. It's not worth it.

Know your Risk Factors: Find out what your risk factors are. Don't assume you don't have Hep C, many people may not have risk factors yet contracted Hep C. Be safe, Be Proactive. Get Tested, Seek Treatment, Get Cured.

Talk to your Doctor and Know your Risk Factors:

The American Liver Foundation states these are the highest risk factors for HCV:

*Anyone born between 1945 and 1965

*If you have ever had a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to July 1992

*Received a clotting factor made before 1987

*Have ever had hemodialysis

*HCV contaminated needle stick or blood in a hospital or healthcare environment

*Shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs or inhaled drugs (even once)

*Have ever worked or been housed in prison

*Have HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

*Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person with HCV enters the body of someone who is not infected

*Anyone with unexplained liver problems or inflammation, including abnormal liver tests

*Borrowed razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers with someone who has Hep C

*Born to an HCV infected mother

*Tattoos or body piercing with reused unsterile tools

*Multiple sex partners or sex with partners who have other sexually transmitted disease, or rough sex

*Some people may never know where they contracted HCV.

How you got Hep C is not as important as getting tested, diagnosed and move on toward treatment and a cure.

Have you been tested for Hep C? Have you been diagnosed with Hep C? Share where you're at in your Hep C journey.

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