

## What to expect at the doctor

After you test positive you should go see your doctor to get a complete check-up. At your visit you can expect some or all of the following:

- A complete check-up to see how you are doing overall.
- Follow-up tests that check how well your liver is working.
- Information on the treatments available for hepatitis C.
- Vaccinations for hepatitis A and hepatitis B. If you do not have insurance or these are not covered by your insurance, call 503-988-3816 or 1-800-SAFENET for info on where to get low-cost vaccines.
- Information on how to keep your liver healthy.
- A referral to a specialist if you are eligible for certain treatments.

### Important!

Talk to your provider about any drugs you are taking, including over-the-counter, prescription or street drugs and natural/herbal supplements.

Also, some treatments for hepatitis C require that you are clean and sober for six months before starting them. If you want or need help getting and staying clean and sober, call 503-244-1312 or 1-800-923-HELP for more information.

## Complementary & alternative medicine

Alternative medicine such as traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, massage and nutritional/herbal supplements have worked well for many people living with hepatitis C. Check out some of the options around town.

Portland Alternative Health Center 1201 SW Morrison St., Portland 503-228-4533	\$15 enrollment fee. Sliding fee scale for visit fees.
Outside In 1236 SW Salmon St., Portland 503-223-4121	\$7-\$10 depending on services. Free to homeless and youth under 21.
National College of Naturopathic Medicine 2220 SW 1st Ave., Portland 503-255-7355	\$20 minimum. Offer sliding fee scale.

Some alternative providers will treat you while you are still using drugs and alcohol. Make sure that you tell them what and how much you use in order to help them help you.

## Take care of your liver

- **Alcohol is a direct toxin to the liver. If you have hepatitis C, the most important thing you can do to stay healthy is to not drink any alcohol.**
- See a doctor to have your health evaluated.
- Consider getting vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

## Prevent the spread of hepatitis C

Even if you are having no symptoms and are feeling fine, *if you've tested positive for hepatitis C, you can give the virus to others.* Here are some ways to reduce the spread of hepatitis C:

- If you are injecting drugs, consider using needle exchange services. Shared needles, water, cotton and cookers for shooting drugs can spread HCV. Call 503-280-1611 for information on where you can exchange used needles for new ones at no cost and get other equipment, resources and referrals.
- Don't share straws or dollar bills for snorting drugs.
- Don't share toothbrushes, razors, home tattooing or piercing equipment, or other personal care items that might have blood on them.
- Don't donate blood, organs or semen.
- Cover cuts or sores on your skin to keep from spreading infectious blood or secretions.

**Hepatitis C is not spread by sneezing, hugging, coughing, food, water, sharing eating or drinking utensils, or by everyday household contact.**

## What about sex?

### If you have a long-term steady sex partner . . .

- Risk of giving HCV to your partner is low, but there is still some risk, especially if there is blood involved.
- Use latex condoms to be even safer, and to protect yourself from other sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, chlamydia and gonorrhea.

### If you have sex with many partners . . .

- Protect yourself from getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). If you have an STD you can give or get hepatitis C more easily.
- Use condoms correctly *every* time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex.

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## If you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant . . .

Five out of every 100 babies born to women with hepatitis C are infected. There is currently no treatment to keep babies from getting the virus from their mothers. Babies born to women with hepatitis C should be tested for the virus. Breastfeeding your baby is good, even if you have hepatitis C. The virus does not appear to be passed in breast milk.

### Important numbers

Who	What	Why
Health Information & Referral	503-988-3816	Info on OHP, low-cost clinics, low-cost hep A and B vaccines, and drug and alcohol treatment programs.
Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Hepatitis Hotline	404-332-4555	For more info on hepatitis C
Hepatitis C Support Project Hotline	415-834-4100	For more info on hepatitis C
Hepatitis Foundation International	800-891-0707	For more info on hepatitis C
Oregon Partnership's Alcohol & Drug Hotline	800-923-HELP 503-244-1312	For info on alcohol and drug treatment programs.
AIDS Hotline	800-777-2437	
United Way Information & Referral	503-222-5555	

### Online information

CDC Hepatitis Homepage	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/index.htm">www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/index.htm</a>
Hepatitis Foundation International	<a href="http://www.hepfi.org">www.hepfi.org</a>
Hepatitis Information Network	<a href="http://www.hepnet.com/hepc.html">www.hepnet.com/hepc.html</a>
Hep C Connection (Hepatitis C Network and Support System)	<a href="http://www.hepc-connection.org">www.hepc-connection.org</a>

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## You've Tested Positive for Hepatitis C . . . . Now What?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a serious virus that affects the liver and is found in an infected person's blood. People living with hepatitis C may feel fine for a long time, or they may experience physical problems like extreme fatigue, headaches, stomach trouble, rashes and itching, and weight loss. Hepatitis C has also been linked to serious long-term illnesses like depression, arthritis, diabetes and cancer.

Most people with hepatitis C carry the virus for the rest of their lives; therefore, they can infect others. Whether you feel fine or feel sick, if you've tested positive for hepatitis C, it is important that you see a doctor to help you stay healthy. There are some treatments for hepatitis C, but they are not for everyone. The most important things you can do to take care of yourself are to see a doctor regularly, reduce/abstain from drinking alcohol and get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

### If you can't afford a doctor . . .

If you can't afford a doctor and don't have health insurance, find out if you can get Oregon Health Plan benefits. Call 503-988-3816 or 1-800-SAFENET for information. They can also give you information on low-cost clinics near you.

### If you are on the Oregon Health Plan . . .

Treatment for hepatitis C is covered by the Oregon Health Plan. In most cases, vaccines for hepatitis A and hepatitis B are also covered. Talk to your doctor or your health plan to find out more about what treatments are and are not covered.

### If you have private health insurance . . .

Check with your insurance provider to find out what treatments they will cover. Make sure to ask whether your insurance will pay for hepatitis A and B vaccines as part of your treatment for hepatitis C.