

# Hepatitis C

## *Should you get tested?*

Hepatitis C, or HCV, is a virus that spreads through contact with contaminated blood from someone else who has the disease. HCV affects your liver and is the leading cause of liver transplants in the U.S.

Experts estimate that over four million people in the United States could be infected with hepatitis C. Individuals may not know they are infected since they might not have symptoms or feel ill for many years.

Over time, HCV can lead to cirrhosis of the liver, or even liver cancer in some cases. Testing for hepatitis C can help identify the virus before liver disease occurs and will help people with hepatitis C learn how to protect their liver and stay healthier.

Hepatitis C testing for veterans is available at VA medical centers and clinics, and treatment and support services also are available through VA.

### ***How can I decide if I may be at risk for HCV?***

**Talk with your health provider if you have any of the following risk factors:**

- you had a blood transfusion before 1992
- you had an organ transplant before 1992
- you have ever injected drugs (even once)
- you were on hemodialysis (kidney dialysis)
- you have had multiple sex partners
- your skin or mucous membranes were exposed to another person's blood
- you have a history of snorting cocaine
- you have unexplained liver disease
- you have had repeated tattoos or body piercings under unclean or non-sterile conditions

**If you are concerned about the risk for hepatitis C, talk with your doctor or nurse or make an appointment to get tested. A simple blood test for hepatitis C should only take a few minutes. In most cases, you can find out the results in a few weeks. Take care of yourself. If you have questions about your risk, talk to someone today about getting tested. Veterans should contact VA or their local Vet Center.**

