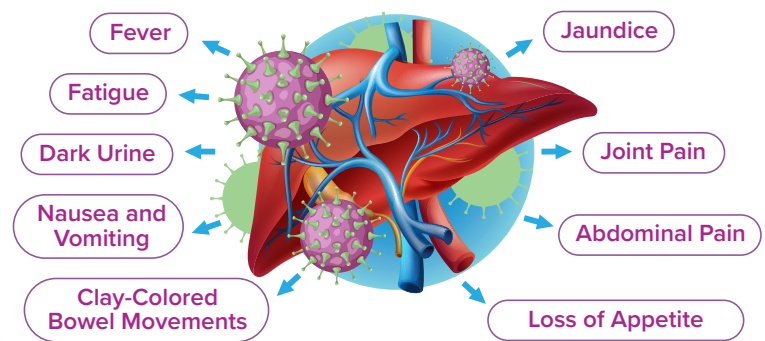


HELPING YOUR PATIENTS UNDERSTAND HEPATITIS C INFECTION, SCREENING, TREATMENT, & CURE

Explain what hepatitis C virus (HCV) is and how it is transmitted

- » **Hepatitis C** is a contagious liver infection caused by HCV that is transmitted through blood or bodily fluids
- » The most common risk factor in the US is **injection drug use**
- » HCV can cause **liver issues**, as well as other problems with many different organs in the body
- » Many people with HCV **do not have symptoms**



Explain who should be screened and how

- » Everyone should be screened for HCV **at least once**
- » People who inject drugs and share needles, syringes, or other equipment should be **routinely tested**
- » The test has 2 parts, which can be done **at the same time**

1

- » The first test **SCREENS** for HCV exposure, at any point in time

2

- » The second test **CONFIRMS** whether or not the virus is still in the body
- » If the second test is **POSITIVE**, **TREATMENT** should be provided

Emphasize that CURE is achievable with treatment

Treatment may be as simple as 1 or 3 pills per day

- » The treatment course is short, only 8 to 12 weeks in most cases
- » HCV medications are safe and have very few side effects
- » HCV treatment is covered by most Medicaid programs, but some states may have restrictions

Cure is attainable in all people, including those with

- » Current or past drug use
- » Continued injection drug use during direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy
- » Concurrent medication for opioid use disorder
- » HIV/HCV coinfection



Highlight why treatment is important!

- » Liver damage can be halted and potentially reversed with treatment
- » The virus can no longer be transmitted to another person after CURE

DON'T LET THE COSTS OF DAA TREATMENT KEEP YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT FROM ACHIEVING HCV CURE

No insurance coverage? State Medicaid restrictions?

For information on patient assistance programs for HCV medication visit:



<https://www.hepmag.com/basics/liver-health/paying-treatment>



You can also build a list of local community resources for your patient/client using this tool:



Community Resource Builder

Ideally, the community resources you provide from the resource builder:

- » Are welcoming and nonstigmatizing
- » Include health clinics, shelters, and social services
- » Have a low barrier to care, including flexible clinic hours and no penalty for missed appointments
- » Can provide necessities such as showers and clothing
- » Use a peer navigator or person with lived experience

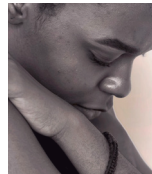
<https://www.exchangehme.com/ResourceBuilder/>

For every 100 people with HCV and receiving no treatment:

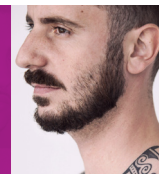
80 will develop chronic infection



52 will develop chronic liver disease



16 will develop cirrhosis



4 will die of cirrhosis or liver cancer



Lastly, HCV reinfection can happen! Here's what you can do:

- » **Acknowledge** that there will be cases of HCV reinfection
- » **Apply** harm reduction principles
- » **Support** harm reduction practices and programs such as medication for opioid use disorder and syringe service programs
- » **Provide** access to HCV treatment providers without stigma or discrimination
- » **Encourage** treatment of injecting partners
- » **Stay** connected after HCV cure for better long-term outcomes