

# Put a Hepatitis C test on your to-do list

Hepatitis C is a silent liver disease that may not give itself away with any obvious symptoms. Don't wait until you feel sick.

Many Canadians born between 1945 and 1975 are unaware of their increased risk of having contracted hepatitis C. According to a new online survey, over 80 per cent are unaware of their increased risk, and only 25 per cent have been tested.

Hepatitis C is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. Some people who get hepatitis C have it for a short time (up to six months), may experience fatigue, loss of appetite and jaundice (when skin and eyes turn yellow) and then get better on their own. This is called acute hepatitis C. But most people (approximately 75 per cent) will go on to develop chronic (or long-term) hepatitis C, meaning your body is not able to fight off the virus and it doesn't go away. Over many years you can develop cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver failure and even liver cancer. Like chronic hepatitis B, chronic hepatitis C is a silent disease because often no symptoms appear until your liver is severely damaged.

Were you born between 1945 and 1975? Consider these top 5 reasons to get tested for hepatitis C.

In Canada, adults born between 1945 and 1975 (either in Canada or elsewhere) are up to five times more likely to be infected by hepatitis C than other adults.

If you have hepatitis C, you may have no symptoms so you could have no clue you have it. Many people can live with hepatitis C for 20 to 30 years without feeling sick despite the fact that their livers are becoming progressively more damaged.

Hepatitis C is a leading cause of cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver transplants.

You can contract hepatitis C through contact with the blood of an infected person but you may not know or remember when you could have been exposed. Approximately 75 per cent of those who become infected with the hepatitis C virus develop chronic disease.

New treatments can cure hepatitis C and prevent further liver damage.

If you were born between 1945 and 1975, the time to get tested is now.

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