

# Hepatitis C

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Hepatitis C is a viral infection that affects the liver. The disease is slow acting and often has no symptoms, so around half of infected people do not know they are infected. If people do experience symptoms, they can include fever, tiredness, stomach pain, nausea, dark urine and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice).

In the long term, hepatitis C can lead to liver damage and liver cancer. There is no vaccine, but treatment is available.

## How it spreads

Hepatitis C spreads through direct contact with infected blood or body fluids.

Hepatitis C does **not** spread through food or water, or through ordinary social contact.

## Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with hepatitis C can attend the service.

## Actions for educators and other staff

Follow standard procedures for handling blood and body fluids, as you may not know if someone has the virus.

Make sure your service has a protocol for managing exposure to blood, body fluids or needlestick injuries.

Cover open wounds with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip) to reduce exposure to blood.

## Actions for parents and carers

If your child has been diagnosed with hepatitis C, follow your doctor's advice. To prevent further liver infections, get your child vaccinated against hepatitis A and B (if they are not already vaccinated).

Cover any cuts or wounds with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip).

## More information about hepatitis C

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C ([healthdirect.gov.au/hepatitis-c](http://healthdirect.gov.au/hepatitis-c)).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker ([healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker))
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.