

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TATTOOS AND HEPATITIS C

## What is Hepatitis C?

The Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a disease that someone with the virus can give to another person if their infected blood enters someone else's body. Most people do not feel sick until late stages of the disease. It can cause the liver to swell and form scars, which can then cause liver failure.

- There are over 3 million Americans with hepatitis C.
- There is no vaccination available to prevent getting the hepatitis C virus if you are exposed.



## Can HCV be transmitted through tattooing or piercing?

Yes, if you are not careful about how and where you get your tattoo or piercing, you can be infected. Remember:

- Find a licensed, safe and clean place to get your tattoo or piercing. Every state has different laws about tattooing and piercing.
- The tattoo or piercing artist should wear gloves and use new needles and fresh ink for each customer.
- Make sure that all equipment being used has been sterilized. This is not the same as just cleaning the equipment with hot water or alcohol. Everything being used should be in its own separate package.
- Getting a tattoo or piercing from an unlicensed person who has used the same needles or ink on more than one person puts you at more risk for hepatitis C infection.



## How else can a person get Hepatitis C?

Many people may be at risk for hepatitis C, even if they did not get a tattoo or piercing. Other risks are:

- Being a baby boomer (born between 1945 and 1965)
- Sharing needles for drug use or sharing straws to use drugs like cocaine
- Having had a blood transfusion before 1992
- Working in a job where you might have contact with someone else's blood
- Sharing razors or other personal items that may have blood on them
- Having HIV

## Who should have a blood test to see if they have Hepatitis C infection?

Anyone who may have been exposed to infection through tattooing or any other risk factor should ask a doctor or health clinic for a hepatitis test. If you test positive, talk with the doctor about what you should do. Most people who have hepatitis C can now be cured.

For more information about **Hepatitis C** and other liver diseases:



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