HEPATITIS C IS NOT SPREAD BY:

- breast-feeding
- sneezing
- casual contact
- sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses
- hugging
- food or water
- coughing

No one should be excluded from work, school, play, child-care, or other settings because of HCV infection.

HOW DO I GET TESTED?

Contact your local IHS, tribal or urban Indian healthcare facility. Tell your provider you want a blood test for hepatitis C because you think you are at risk.

Getting tested for hepatitis C can help you to:

- learn how to protect your liver from further harm.
- learn how to prevent spreading hepatitis to others.
- learn whether treatment is needed or available.

For information on viral hepatitis:
***http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis* or call:**

VIRAL HEPATITIS AND
LIVER DISEASE SECTION
INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
AND DISEASE PREVENTION
5300 Homestead Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
(505) 248-4132

Hepatitis C

KNOW THE RISKS, GET TESTED

Almost 4 million Americans have been infected with hepatitis C virus

Produced by the Indian Health Service
Division of Epidemiology and Disease Prevention
Albuquerque, NM

WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is found in the blood of people who have it. HCV is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. Hepatitis C can lead to liver damage and death.

HOW SERIOUS IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C can be a serious disease. It may take many years for the liver damage to become a problem that needs medical help. Doing things that hurt the liver, like heavy drinking and substance abuse, can make the damage happen faster. Over time, the damage may lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, cancer of the liver and liver failure.

IS THERE TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS C?

Yes - Medicines are approved for the treatment of some people with hepatitis C. If you test positive for HCV infection, you should check with your doctor to see if you have chronic infection and if so, whether treatment can help you.

HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY HAVE HEPATITIS C?

When a person becomes infected with HCV, he or she may not notice any symptoms. If there are symptoms, they may include:

- Extreme tiredness
- Stomach pain and swelling
- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Yellowish eyes and skin
- Dark urine

WHAT IF YOU DON'T FEEL SICK?

Many people with hepatitis C have no symptoms and feel well. For some people, the most common symptom is extreme tiredness. If you think you are at risk, the only way to tell if you have been infected with HCV is to have a blood test.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR HEPATITIS C?

To get hepatitis C you **must have blood-to-blood contact** with a person who has hepatitis C. Ask your doctor for a blood test for hepatitis C if:

- You have injected illegal drugs, even once
- You were treated for clotting problems with a blood product made before 1987
- You received blood transfusions or organ transplants before 1992
- You are a health care worker and have had contact with blood from someone who has hepatitis C
- You have ever been on long-term kidney dialysis
- You have signs of liver disease
- Your mother was hepatitis C positive when you were born

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- HCV can be spread by sex, but this does not occur very often.
- A person who has hepatitis C can still get other types of viral hepatitis, like hepatitis A or hepatitis B.
- Drinking alcohol can cause more damage to your liver, allowing hepatitis C to develop more quickly
- There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.
- There is treatment for hepatitis C, but it is not always effective
- You can avoid HCV infection by taking simple preventive measures!

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

- ***Don't ever shoot drugs.*** If you do, stop and get into a drug treatment program. If you cannot stop, do not reuse or share syringes, water, or drug works. Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B.
- ***Wear gloves if you touch anyone's blood.*** Healthcare workers should get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- ***Do not share toothbrushes, razors, or anything else that could have blood on it.***
- ***If you get a tattoo or body piercing, you can get infected if:***
  - -The tools that are used have someone else's blood on them
  - -The artist or piercer doesn't follow good health practices (sterilizing instruments, washing hands, using gloves)