



*For Staff Education*

# Hepatitis C

## *What is it?*

*For Staff Education*

- Hepatitis C (HCV) is a virus that causes hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver
- The symptoms include anorexia (loss of appetite), abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting, and jaundice (although less frequently than with Hepatitis B)
- A higher percentage of HCV cases become chronic and carry a greater risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer compared to Hepatitis B

## *How is it spread?*

- HCV is parenterally transmitted through blood or body fluids, intravenous drug use, and sexual contact
- In health care facilities, HCV is spread by contact with infected fluids due to sharps injuries, through cuts or wounds on the surface of the skin or mucosal exposure such as splashes into the eyes or mouth
- Communally used razors or toothbrushes are potential vehicles for HCV transmission

## *Where is it found?*

- In the blood and body fluids of people infected with HCV
- HCV can survive in the environment for at least 16 hours, but no longer than 4 days
- All persons who are infected with HCV are potentially infectious through their blood or body fluids

## *Prevention and control*

- There is currently no vaccine available to prevent Hepatitis C
- Use routine practices to prevent exposure to blood and body fluids: equipment must be cleaned and disinfected after use; use proper personal protective equipment (i.e. gloves and face protection where contact with blood or body fluids is likely); employ safe sharp handling and use safety engineered medical devices where available
- Seek medical attention after a sharps exposure to initiate post-exposure protocols
- Discourage sharing of razors or toothbrushes among clients/patients/residents
- Follow safer sex practices and don't share needles, straws, pipes or other drug-related utensils



*Giving Health a Helping Hand*

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