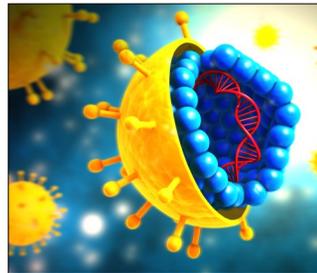




MAY is HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH

Dual Epidemics: The Opioid Crisis and Hepatitis C

- Every day, more than 115 people in the U.S. die after overdosing on opioids.
- **A less visible yet deadly consequence of the opioid epidemic is the transmission of the hepatitis C virus (HCV).** HCV is highly infectious, so it is easily transmitted, even in microscopic amounts of blood, which can occur through sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment.
- **HCV affects an estimated 3.5 million people** in the U.S.
- New research suggests that the recent, **substantial increase in new HCV infections is associated with increased opioid injection.**
- Certain groups have been especially impacted by the dual epidemics: **people who are white, women, and people aged 18 to 29 and 30 to 39.**
- Until recently, HCV primarily affected older adults born between 1945 and 1965 (baby boomers), but the **greatest increases in new infections are now seen in young people.**
- **Maternal HCV infections** nearly doubled between 2009-2014.
- Thankfully there are **effective treatments** for both HCV and opioid use disorders (OUD), and **treating OUD with effective medications is prevention for HCV.**



Sources: Image of HCV, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/images/2017/hcv-virus-highres.png>; CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality. CDC Wonder, Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2017. <https://wonder.cdc.gov>; Patrick, S. W., Bauer, A. M., Warren, M. D., Jones, T. F., Wester, C. (2017). Hepatitis C virus infection among women giving birth – Tennessee and United States, 2009-2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 66(18), 470-473. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6618a3.htm>; Zibbell, J. E., Asher, A. K., Patel, R. C., Kupronis, B., Iqbal, K., Ward, J. W., & Holtzman, D. (2018). Increases in acute hepatitis C virus infection related to a growing opioid epidemic and associated injection drug use, United States, 2004 to 2014. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108(2), 175-181. Retrieved from <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304132>



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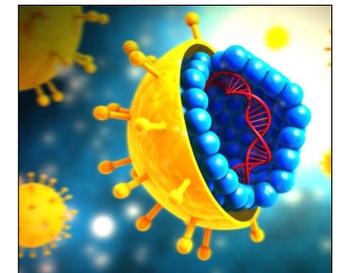
Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



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Hepatitis Awareness Month



FAQ about Hepatitis C

- **What is hepatitis C?** Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease resulting from infection with the hepatitis C virus.
- **How is hepatitis C spread?** It is primarily spread through contact with blood from an infected person.
- **Why are baby boomers at increased risk?** The reason for increased rates among baby boomers is not well understood. However, it could be due to exposure to contaminated blood and blood products before universal screening of the blood supply and other health care safety precautions were adopted.
- **What should I do if I'm a baby boomer?** The first step to protecting your health is to get tested. Ask your primary care provider for a hepatitis C test, sometimes referred to as a hepatitis C antibody test.
- **What symptoms should I look for?** People with hepatitis C often have no symptoms and can live with the infection for decades before finding out they are hepatitis C-positive.
- **What happens if chronic hepatitis C goes untreated?** Without treatment, chronic hepatitis C can cause serious health issues, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death.
- **Can hepatitis C be cured?** The good news is, hepatitis C is highly curable. New treatments can be taken orally, last for fewer weeks, and have less side effects than previous treatments.

Source: CDC. (2015). *Hepatitis C: Why Baby Boomers Should Get Tested*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis/Media/PDFs/FactSheet-Boomers.pdf>

Want to learn more about hepatitis C?

Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis/index.htm>

This Mid-America ATTC faith community bulletin insert is based on the Centers for Disease Control's *Know More Hepatitis* campaign.

Hepatitis Awareness Month



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