



## HEPATITIS C BASICS

### WHAT IS HCV (Hepatitis C Virus)?

- Spreads via blood-to-blood contact (blood-borne)
- Can cause both chronic or acute infection
- Causes serious disease of liver and other organs
- Major reason for liver cancer and liver transplant
- No vaccine and no 100% cure available yet
- Affects over 250,000 Canadians, many of whom do not yet know they have it; HCV is a 'silent killer'
- HCV spreads much more easily than HIV virus
- There are several strains or 'genotypes' of HCV

### HCV TRANSMISSION

- Shared drug equipment such as needles and straws
- Tattooing or piercing with contaminated tools or ink
- Blood transfusion or blood products (pre-1992)
- Occasionally spread via rough sexual activity, childbirth, and contaminated medical/dental tools

### HCV SYMPTOMS (not everyone experiences them)

- Often no symptoms while damage occurs 'silently'
- Constant tiredness, weakness, aches, poor digestion, itching, forgetfulness, confusion, yellowed skin or eyes

### HCV TREATMENT

- "Cocktail" of two or more drugs given over an extended period (usually several months) seems to be a cure for many, but side-effects are often severe, and treatment success is not guaranteed.
- Many new treatments are in development phase.
- Healthy food, exercise, rest, and avoiding alcohol or other substances that can stress the liver will help.



Photos: Milk Thistle, a traditional treatment for liver disease  
Promising treatments are available now, and more will be on line soon.



Hepatitis C Education  
and Prevention Society



## WHO IS AT SPECIAL RISK?

### USERS OF RECREATIONAL DRUGS

- Even one-time use many decades ago is a high risk.
- Shared straws, pipes, or needles can all spread HCV.

### THOSE WITH TATTOOS, PIERCINGS, BRANDING

- Autoclaved tools and individually-sealed ink packages should be used during all body-art procedures.

### IMMIGRANTS FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES

- Many, especially children, were infected with HCV during mass-vaccinations using shared needles.

### BLOOD RECIPIENTS (BEFORE 1992)

- Some patients were not informed of procedures.

### HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

- Needle-stick and other accidents can transmit HCV.

### GAY MALES AND SEX-TRADE WORKERS

- Hepatitis C is generally spread via blood, not semen.
- Rough sex without a condom can spread HCV.

## IN DOUBT? GET TESTED!



- A free or low-cost, confidential blood test is all you need. To get a test, contact:
- your doctor or local health unit
  - your local Sexual Health society, street nurses, Street Clinic, or Youth Clinic



## TO CONTACT HEPCBC

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Publishing made possible from financial support through  
MERCK "Better Care, Healthy Communities" Funding.  
Double face image contributed by Jade, created during  
Body Mapping Workshop co-hosted by CATIE and AIDS Vinc. Island  
Pamphlet copyright by HepCBC, September 9, 2011

Working together, we can...



Confront hepatitis C

Hepatitis C-positive people and caregivers  
Education, support, and prevention  
Since 1996

HepCBC

What We Do, Who We Are



Hepatitis C Education  
and Prevention Society

www.hepcbc.ca

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

### VOLUNTEER TIME OR EXPERTISE

We have a great variety of volunteer positions available. Email or phone our office for information.

### EDUCATE YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Go to [www.hepcbc.ca](http://www.hepcbc.ca) to learn more about HCV prevention, testing, treatment, and how to fight stigma

### BECOME A MEMBER

To join, send \$10 cash or cheque to our office with:

"Membership Request"

-- Name:

-- Mailing Address:

-- Phone # and/or Email Address:

Mailings to members include no reference to hepatitis on outside of envelope. If you prefer not to receive mail from us, request "Email only". Members can vote at AGM and (30 days after joining) run for the Board.

## WHAT SERVICES DOES HepCBC OFFER? AND WHY?

### SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO

- have recently been diagnosed as HCV+
- are going through treatment
- are (pre- or post-) transplant liver recipients
- have longterm, chronic, or advanced hepatitis C
- are contemplating HCV treatment or research trial
- want to discuss alternative treatments, diets, supplements, and exercise
- have other health complications due to HCV
- want to support a HCV+ friend or family member

### POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

- All services are provided for free.
- Preserving client confidentiality is a key goal. We understand HCV stigma and respect that HCV status, health and contact information must only be disclosed by you, when you want to do it, and with no outside pressure.
- We strive to be non-judgemental and respectful while exploring differences in experiences and insights.
- Our concern is helping as many HCV+ people as possible, not dwelling on how they contracted it.
- We provide the most current research results about testing and treatment options. We want you to be able to make informed decisions according to your own unique circumstances.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF HepCBC'S HISTORY

- 1996 -- HepCBC incorporated in British Columbia
- 2000 -- HepCBC took over monthly publication *hepc.bull* (published continually since 1996) and Peppermint Patti's FAQ's (updated regularly)
- 2001 -- HepCBC became a registered charity (#86800-4979-RR0001).
- 2002 -- established website [www.hepcbc.ca](http://www.hepcbc.ca)

Pepper, whose owner died of hepatitis C, and Grass, a Brazilian student volunteer



Community members support HepCBC's participation in the annual Victoria Day Parade

### HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Education and prevention activities include lending library, publications, website, and outreach (prisons, schools) and speaking to interested community groups.
- Awareness and anti-stigma activities include parades, World Hepatitis Day memorials, and health fairs.
- Support activities include phone/email referrals, pamphlets for recently-diagnosed, and support groups.
- We partner with national and international groups
- We provide patient and caregiver input to Canadian drug review and Pharmacare coverage process.

"Educating ourselves and others is the key to ending stigma."



University of Victoria student volunteers rehearsing play to educate teenage audiences about hepatitis C risks

### IF YOU'RE ABLE TO DONATE MONEY

We are a small registered charity which struggles financially from month to month. We are hoping to re-open our office and re-hire a paid executive director some day soon. So gifts and bequests are greatly appreciated! Consult [www.hepcbc.ca](http://www.hepcbc.ca) or phone 250-592-3892 for details. We provide registered charitable donation tax receipts.