

Hepatitis C and Heart Transplant: What You Need to Know

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (known as HCV).

The virus can be spread from person to person through contact with blood.

If it is left untreated, hepatitis C can cause liver disease that cause liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer and death.

Hepatitis C does not affect your heart.

Hepatitis C-positive Heart Donor

You received a heart from someone who had Hepatitis C.

This means that your donor's blood tested positive for hepatitis C. You are at high risk for getting hepatitis C after your transplant.

Your transplant team will check your blood work closely for signs of hepatitis C or liver damage.

You will meet with a liver specialist (hepatologist) in the hospital who will be part of your follow-up health care team.

Symptoms of Hepatitis C

Common symptoms include:

- fever
- jaundice (yellow eyes)
- dark urine
- abdominal (belly) pain

- fatigue
- appetite loss
- nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- clay-colored stool
- joint pain.

Tests for Hepatitis C

Blood tests will confirm that you have hepatitis C.

Treatment for Hepatitis C

If you have hepatitis C, the hepatologist will prescribe medicine. You *may* be cured if you take the medicines as directed. Hepatitis C medicines have cure rates of 97 to 100 percent when they are taken correctly.

Medicines used most often to treat hepatitis C are:

- MAVYRET® (glecaprevir/pibrentasvir):
3 pills one time a day for 8 weeks
- EPCLUSA® (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir):
1 pill one time a day for 12 weeks
- HARVONI® (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir):
1 pill one time a day for 12 weeks.

Your transplant team will test your blood 12 weeks after you finish your medicine to confirm you are cured.

In the rare case you still have the virus in your blood, you will meet with the hepatologist for more treatment.

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How You Can Prevent Spreading Hepatitis C

Until you have finished your treatment and blood tests confirm your hepatitis C is cured, you will need to be careful not to expose others.

- Do not share toothbrushes or razors.
- Anyone who may be exposed to your blood should wear gloves. For example, if someone checks your blood glucose or gives you an insulin shot.
- Use latex condoms when having sex. (The risk for spreading hepatitis C through sexual contact is rare.)
- Do not share needles.
- Consider the risks of getting tattoos, body piercings or both. Be sure to have either performed by an artist or piercer who follows good health practices.
- Do not donate blood.

Activities That Do Not Spread Hepatitis C

You can't spread hepatitis C by:

- sharing eating utensils
- breastfeeding
- hugging or kissing
- holding hands
- coughing or sneezing.

Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.