

Treatment Centres in the Eastern Region

Addenbrooke's Hospital
Hills Road
Cambridge CB2 0QQ

Basildon Hospital
Nethermayne
Basildon SS16 5NL

Bedford Hospital
Kempston Road
Bedford MK42 9DJ

Ipswich Hospital
Heath Road
Ipswich IP4 5PD

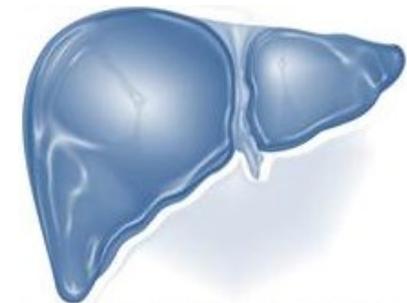
Luton & Dunstable Hospital
Lewsey Road
Luton LU4 0DZ

Norfolk & Norwich Hospital
Colney Lane
Norwich NR4 7UY

Peterborough City Hospital
Bretton Gate
Peterborough PE3 9GZ



Hepatitis C Virus Infection



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Hepatitis C Virus Infection (HCV): What you need to know

What is HCV?

HCV is a blood borne virus that causes liver inflammation and scarring. Up to 2% of the world's population is infected by the virus.

How is HCV spread?

HCV can only be spread from person-to-person by blood-to-blood contact. Common modes of transmission are:

- Intravenous Drug Use (IVDU)
- Blood transfusion prior to 1992 in the UK
- Needle stick injuries
- Mother to baby (5% risk)
- Surgical procedures outside of the UK

Less common modes of transmission are:

- Sharing razors and toothbrushes
- Injecting performance enhancing drugs
- Inhaling contaminated drugs such as cocaine
- Tattooing
- Body piercing
- Acupuncture
- Men to men sex

How can the spread of HCV be prevented?

There isn't a vaccination for HCV. It is important to prevent the spread of HCV by these simple steps:

- Avoid sharing injecting equipment
- Not donating blood or organs
- Avoid sharing razors and toothbrushes
- Use barrier methods of contraception for anal intercourse

How is hepatitis C diagnosed?

If you think you might be in an at risk group, you should attend your GP and explain your concerns. A blood test will be performed to test for exposure to HCV. If blood testing is positive you will be referred to a doctor with a special interest in HCV. You may undergo an ultrasound scan or Fibroscan of your liver.

Is there treatment for HCV?

Yes. Newer well tolerated and effective treatments are available. Treatment duration and type depends on HCV genotype. Treatment is usually an eight or 24 week course. You will have regular clinic appointments for monitoring and blood testing. You will need to have further blood testing at 12 weeks after the end of the treatment and then again at 48-60 weeks to ensure that the treatment has been successful.

It is important to maintain a healthy, balanced diet and take regular exercise. Alcohol intake should be low. Vaccination against hepatitis A and B is also recommended for those patients who have not been exposed to those viruses previously.

Useful contacts:

www.nhs.uk/hepc

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

www.hcvaction.org.uk

www.worldhepatitisalliance.org

www.basl.org.uk

www.hepctrust.org.uk

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