

KNOW THE
FACTS

SEX AND HEP C

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SEX AND HEP C KNOW THE FACTS

When I'm being fisted he needs to know what he's doing and I need to know what he's doing. Because blood can be involved, I also protect myself from hep C.

Several times we've been involved in playing with a group of guys. To keep things hygienic for them as well as for me, I always have condoms on hand to put on the toys for arse play. Yeah, we keep some soapy water and a towel on hand so we can wash the toys between arses. Gerard

Use latex gloves for fisting and condoms for fucking, and change them between each arse. This can minimise contact with blood and reduce the risk of getting or passing on hep C or STIs.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Hep C is usually passed on by sharing injecting equipment (including needles, spoons, tourniquets and filters) as well as tattooing or body piercing with infected equipment. However, getting hep C during sex is also possible.

A higher number of cases are occurring in men with HIV. An estimated 13% of people with HIV also have hep C.

You may be able to get or pass on hep C during

- group sex
- longer, harder fucking sessions
- fisting

or by

- sharing toys
- unprotected anal sex
- having syphilis

All these can involve exposure to blood, bleeding or broken skin, and therefore exposure to the hep C virus.

Hep C is much easier to pass on or get than HIV.

Exposure to tiny particles of infected blood on fingers, cocks, hands and sex toys can be a risk for hep C.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE HEP C?

You don't know for sure, unless you have a blood test. You can have hep C for many years and not know it.

Hep C symptoms can take years (10 years or more) to develop. Signs or symptoms can include fatigue, nausea, depression and problems with your liver.

Most positive guys have regular blood tests to monitor HIV and STIs, but these don't routinely include a test for hep C. You need to specifically ask for a hep C test.

If you have had syphilis recently, you might want to test for hep C.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT IT?

Use latex gloves for fisting and condoms for fucking, and change them between each arse. This can minimise contact with blood and reduce the risk of getting or passing on hep C or STIs.

During group sex when you use toys wash them with hot, soapy water and dry between each arse.

Shared lube may be a risk for hep C. Bring your own.

Use clean injecting equipment each time.

Be aware of stray fits or blood where you play.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF HEP C IF YOU'RE ALREADY HIV POSITIVE?

HIV can increase levels of hep C in the blood. Being HIV positive may increase the risk of passing on hep C during group sex, longer and harder fucking sessions, sharing toys and fisting.

Hep C can be more serious and progress faster in HIV positive guys, so regular testing is even more important.

If left undiagnosed and untreated, it can seriously damage your liver, which can make it harder to take HIV medication. This is because medications are processed by the body through the liver.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR TESTING AND TREATMENT?

You can ask your GP or HIV doctor for a test when you have regular blood tests done. You can also go to a Sexual Health Clinic. These are free and you don't have to use your real name.

If the results show you are coinfecting with hep C and HIV, it's important to find a doctor with experience in coinfection.

Managing HIV can be more difficult if you have or get hep C.

If you have hep C, the earlier you find out, the more likely your treatment will be successful.



HOW IS IT TREATED?

Hep C treatment has significantly improved in recent years.

Treatment for hep C is a combination of two drugs: pegylated interferon (injected weekly) and ribavirin (a tablet taken twice daily). This treatment is taken for six to twelve months.

The drugs can have significant side effects, which may vary in severity as treatment progresses. There is no vaccination for hep C.

If you are coinfecting with both HIV and hep C get vaccinated for hep A and B. This will protect your liver from further damage.

See your doctor or Sexual Health Clinic to discuss hep A and hep B vaccinations.

A healthy diet and reducing alcohol intake can improve your ability to cope with hep C.

IF YOU'VE HAD IT ONCE CAN YOU GET IT AGAIN?

Yes. You can be re-infected with hep C, even after you've been treated.

Knowing the facts means you can better protect yourself or get treated.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TREATMENT, CLINICS AND SUPPORT

Hepatitis C Council of New South Wales for information on treatment and support. **Ph: 9332 1853** or **email: hccnsw@hepatitisc.org.au** or visit **www.hepatitisc.org.au**.

Hep C Helpline 9332 1599 (Sydney) **1800 803 990** (regional NSW) may be able to refer you to doctors and other health care workers.

Kirketon Road Centre (KRC) offers hepatitis C information, screening, monitoring of liver function and PCR testing (for hep C, viral load and genotype) as well as a regular hep C specialist clinic. **Ph: 9360 2766**.

St Vincents Viral Hepatitis Clinic Darlinghurst. Clients who are hepatitis C positive are assessed by a medical specialist. Services such as PCR testing (for hep C, viral load and genotype), hepatitis C information, monitoring of liver function and follow-up are available. **Ph: 8382 3707** or **8382 1111**.

Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis C Service offers support and information for people living with hepatitis C. **Ph: 9515 5030** or **1800 108 098** (NSW Country) or visit **www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au**.

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