



## HEPATITIS C (ACUTE & CHRONIC)

### WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

HEPATITIS C IS A LIVER DISEASE CAUSED BY THE HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HCV), WHICH IS FOUND IN THE BLOOD OF PERSONS WHO HAVE THIS DISEASE.

### WHO GETS HEPATITIS C?

PERSONS AT HIGHEST RISK FOR HCV INFECTION INCLUDE DRUG USERS, AND PEOPLE WHO HAD BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS, BLOOD PRODUCTS OR ORGAN DONATIONS BEFORE JUNE 1992. OTHER PERSONS AT RISK FOR HEPATITIS C INCLUDE LONG-TERM KIDNEY DIALYSIS PATIENTS, HEALTH CARE WORKERS AFTER EXPOSURES, INFANTS BORN TO HCV-INFECTED MOTHERS, AND PEOPLE WITH HIGH-RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, MULTIPLE PARTNERS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

### HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

HEPATITIS C VIRUS IS SPREAD WHEN BLOOD OF AN INFECTED PERSON ENTERS THE BODY OF A PERSON WHO IS NOT INFECTED. IT IS NOT SPREAD BY BREAST MILK OR CASUAL CONTACT.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND CONSEQUENCES OF INFECTION?

APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT OF PERSONS INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS DEVELOP SYMPTOMS THAT MAY INCLUDE YELLOWING OF THE SKIN AND WHITES OF THE EYES, TIREDNESS, DARK-COLORED URINE, STOMACH PAIN, LOSS OF APPETITE AND NAUSEA. APPROXIMATELY 70 PERCENT OF PERSONS INFECTED MAY DEVELOP LIVER DISEASE, SOMETIMES DECADES AFTER INITIAL INFECTION.

### HOW SOON DO SYMPTOMS OCCUR?

SYMPTOMS MAY OCCUR FROM TWO WEEKS TO SIX MONTHS AFTER INFECTION BUT USUALLY WITHIN SIX TO NINE WEEKS.

### WHEN AND FOR HOW LONG IS A PERSON ABLE TO SPREAD HEPATITIS C?

PERSONS WITH ACUTE HEPATITIS C VIRUS INFECTION CAN SPREAD THE DISEASE ONE OR MORE WEEKS BEFORE THE ONSET OF SYMPTOMS. ALL PERSONS WHO TEST POSITIVE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE CONTAGIOUS.

### WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS C?

MEDICATION IS USED TO TREAT THE DISEASE. THE DECISION TO TREAT HEPATITIS C IS COMPLEX AND IS BEST MADE BY A PHYSICIAN EXPERIENCED IN TREATING THE DISEASE.

### HOW CAN THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS C BE PREVENTED?

THOSE WHO HAVE HAD HEPATITIS C SHOULD REMAIN AWARE THAT THEIR BLOOD IS POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS.