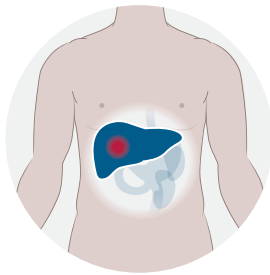


Hepatitis C is a serious infection caused by a virus. It damages the liver, which performs essential functions in the body.

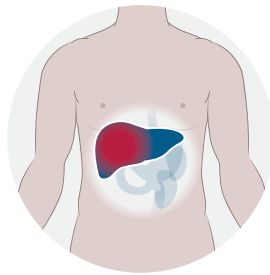
**1** The first six months of having hepatitis C are called '**acute infection**'. Most people don't notice any symptoms.

During this time, the body can sometimes get rid of the virus on its own. In this case, treatment wouldn't be needed.



**2** If you have had hepatitis C for more than six months, this is called '**chronic infection**'.

You may not notice any symptoms for several years as hepatitis C develops slowly.

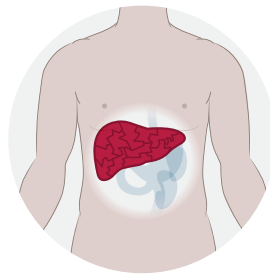


**3** You can reduce damage to your liver by avoiding alcohol and recreational drugs.



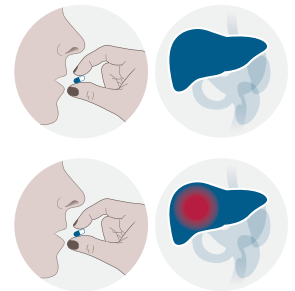
**4** When your liver is damaged it becomes hard and scarred. This can make you feel unwell.

Moderate scarring is called 'fibrosis'. More serious scarring is called 'cirrhosis'.



**5** The aim of treatment is to cure you of hepatitis C. You usually need to take it for 6, 12 or 18 months.

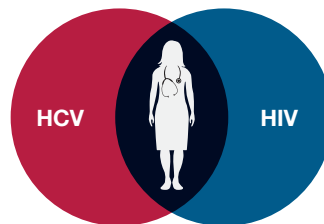
But hepatitis C treatment doesn't work for everybody.



**6** New, better drugs are being developed and are starting to be used.



**7** Having HIV makes hepatitis C more serious and harder to treat. Make sure your doctors are experienced in treating HIV and hepatitis C together.



### Important points:

- Hepatitis C is a serious infection which damages the liver.
- Some people have hepatitis C for many years without feeling unwell or having any symptoms.
- If hepatitis C treatment works, it will cure you of hepatitis C.