

# TYPES OF HEP C

## What do I to know about Hepatitis C?

### *What does 'genotype' mean?*

*Genotype* refers to the structure of the virus. There are at least 6 different kinds (genotypes) of hepatitis C. Each genotype has many subtypes (this means that each main type of hepatitis C has many smaller types...which means there are many different types of hepatitis C out there!).



**IMPORTANT:** You can have more than 1 type of hepatitis C at a time. *This means already having hepatitis C does not protect you from getting a second infection.*

### *What can you tell from a blood test?*

Blood is pretty amazing stuff! Your blood sample will let you and the doctor know which type of hepatitis C you have. This information will let you and your doctor which type of treatment will work best for you.

### *Why do so many people stay infected for a long time?*

Over time, the actual structure of the hepatitis C virus changes. Your body may have developed antibodies (protection) against the old structure of the virus, but these antibodies you've already developed may not recognize or 'fight off' the newer structure of the hepatitis C virus (so it will stay in your body). This seems to be how the virus creates and continues long-lasting (chronic) infection.

There is no vaccination against hepatitis C. The safest way to keep from getting it or keep others from getting it is to not share needles, crack pipes and any other equipment (like mixers, spoons, water, straws for snorting....).

*Another way to keep your liver from getting really sick is to get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B. Ask us in the van, we can do it for FREE.*

# TATTOO'S & HIV/HEPATITIS

## HOMEMADE & PRISON TATTOOS

It's not a good idea to get a homemade or prison tattoo. Many people get HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis when the person making the tattoo doesn't use sterile equipment. An infection happens when needles and inks are used on more than one person.



- **Inks can never be safely shared.**
- Soap and water or bleach are not effective enough to kill these viruses.
- Alcohol is also not good enough.
- Boiling of the needles for 10 minutes at a rapid boil will reduce your risk, but to be safe it is recommended that no needles be reused.

**The safest way to get a tattoo is from a licensed tattoo parlor that does not reuse inks or needles and uses an autoclave (sterilizer) to clean all their equipment!** It might cost you a little more but it could save your life.

**NOTE:** In Canadian prisons 30% to 40% of prisoners have hepatitis C, some have HIV/AIDS. In populations outside prisons hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS is also on the rise.

### **Bandages On Bum**

Ole staggered home very late after another evening with his drinking buddy, Swen. He took off his shoes to avoid waking his wife, Lena. He tiptoed quietly toward the stairs leading to their upstairs bedroom, but misjudged the bottom step. As he caught himself by grabbing the banister, his body swung around and he landed heavily on his rump. A whiskey bottle in each back pocket broke and made the landing especially painful. Managing not to yell, Ole sprung up, pulled down his pants, and looked in the hall mirror to see that his butt cheeks were cut and bleeding. He managed to quietly find a full box of Band-Aids and began putting a Band-Aid as best he could on each place he saw blood. He then hid the now almost empty box and shuffled and stumbled his way to bed. In the morning, Ole woke up with searing pain in his head and butt and Lena staring at him from across the room. She said, "You were drunk again last night, weren't you Ole?" Ole said, "Why you say such a mean ting?" "Well," Lena said, "it could be the open front door, it could be the broken glass at the bottom of the stairs, it could be the drops of blood trailing through the house, it could be your bloodshot eyes, but mostly it's all those Band-Aids stuck on the downstairs mirror."



# HEPATITIS C... TRUE OR FALSE?

## *Hepatitis C Myths and Facts*

- The hepatitis C virus can only survive for three seconds outside the body.

**False** No one knows exactly how long the virus can survive outside the body. We do know that the virus is hard to kill and can survive in almost invisible amounts of blood. Most experts guess that the hepatitis C virus can survive for a couple of hours outside the body.

- You can get hep C from shaking hands with someone.

**False** Hep C is spread through blood. Common ways of getting hep C are sharing rigs, sharing equipment for cocaine, or sharing pipes with someone who has hep C.

- You can have hep C and feel and look fine.

**True** Most people with hep C feel and look fine. It is guessed that only 25% of people with hep C know about it. The only way to know if you have it is to ask for a hep C blood test.

- There is no cure for hep C.

**False** A few years ago there was no cure for hep C. There are now new treatments available that can cure hep C, but they don't work for everyone.

- People with hep C should avoid sexual contact.

**False** The chance of getting hep C from sex is very low. There still is some risk and it's still important to practice safer sex to protect yourself from hep C and other infections (like HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia, etc...). Blood or open cuts and sores also spread it. Avoid sharing any drug equipment (needles, spoons, filters, water and crack stems etc...).

- Babies can get hep C from their mothers.

**True** The chance of a pregnant woman passing hep C to her baby during pregnancy is low. About 5 out of 100 hep C positive women will pass it on to their babies.

# INJECTING AND YOUR VEINS

## *EVER MISSED A VEIN, AND HIT A NERVE?*

...and other injecting problems

Unlike most veins, nerves are not visible from the outside of the body. However, if you are injecting and miss a vein but hit a nerve it will be easy to notice. You will experience extreme pain and no blood will enter the syringe if you pull back on the plunger. Hitting a nerve can be dangerous and cause a limb to be paralyzed. The underside of the wrists has lots of nerves; veins and arteries all close together. **SHOOTING THERE IS VERY RISKY.**

**(Ask the Street Connections Staff About Finding Your Veins.)**



Needle inserted properly.

### Other Misses

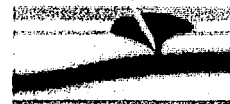


Needle damaging bottom of vein.



Needle missing vein. A "miss" may lead to skin or muscle infection (cellulitis).

*Always make sure that your spoon or cooker is as clean as possible; like needles and syringes, it should never be shared with anyone else because doing so can transmit viruses and infections from one person to another.*



Scraped vein causing bleeding under the skin and bruising.



Completely piercing through both sides of your vein will lead to increased damage to your veins, less of a "high" and possible infections.



Injecting the drugs into your vein before you undo your "tie" may "balloon up" your vein and possibly "blow" it.

## MUSCLING (SHOOTING INTO THE MUSCLES)

Shooting into the muscles is often associated with injectable steroids and hormones. However, some heroin or other opiate users are known to use this way. While it takes longer to get high and the strength is lessened, the high will last longer. It may be half an hour to forty-five minutes before you get high.

- Sometimes when you miss your vein you may accidentally inject into your muscles.
- Shooting T's & R's, Cocaine, Heroin (or any other drug that may not be sterile), into your muscles make it high risk for getting an abscess.
- For those that decide to shoot in their muscles, the safest areas are the upper arms, thighs, and butt cheeks.
- If you get an infection see your doctor immediately. If left untreated, these infections can lead to loss of a limb.
- Shooting into a muscle may cause nerve damage.



## SKIN POPPING (SHOOTING UNDER THE SKIN)

Skin-popping is the injecting between the body's skin and fatty layer. Like muscling, the drug effects are not as strong as shooting in the veins, the effects take longer to happen and last longer. Like muscling, shooting Cocaine, T's & R's, Heroin, and other impure drugs, will put you at high risk for abscesses or other bacterial infections.

- For those that decide to "skin pop", the safest areas are the legs, thighs and forearms.
- If you get an infection see your doctor immediately. If left untreated, these infections can lead to loss of a limb.
- Some people accidentally "skin pop" when they miss their veins.