

Hepatitis C Virus: Signs and Symptoms

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DESCRIPTION

Hepatitis C is a kind of viral hepatitis caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). It is a contagious infection that primarily affects the liver. When people initially become infected, they usually have mild or no symptoms. In roughly 75% to 85% of patients who are initially infected, the virus remains in the liver. There are frequently no symptoms early on in the course of a chronic infection. However, over time, it frequently leads to liver damage and, in rare cases, cirrhosis. Cirrhosis can cause major complications in certain patients, such as liver failure, cancer, or dilated blood vessels in the oesophagus and stomach.

Blood-to-blood contact, which is related with injectable drug use, improperly cleaned medical equipment, needle stick injuries in healthcare, and transfusions, is the most common way for HCV to spread. The chance of a transfusion is less than one in every two million, according to blood screening. It can also be passed from a woman to her infant at birth if she is infected. It does not spread by casual touch. Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E are the five recognized hepatitis viruses. Hepatitis C does not have a vaccination. Preventative interventions include harm reduction efforts for people who inject drugs, blood tests, and the management of patients with chronic infections.

Acute infection

Fever, muscular or joint pain, abdominal pain, decreased appetite and weight loss, jaundice are all common symptoms which comes under acute infection and other examples are, are fatigues, nausea, and vomiting. Although liver injury and increased liver enzymes may occur, there is no evidence that acute hepatitis C can induce acute liver failure on its own. Symptoms and laboratory findings that point to liver illness should prompt additional testing, which can aid in the early detection of hepatitis C infection.

Chronic infection

Around 80% of persons who are exposed to the virus get a long-term illness. For at least six months, this is characterized as the presence of detectable viral replication. During the first several decades of infection, most people have few or no symptoms. Hepatitis C can cause weariness and mild cognitive impairments in people who have it for a long time. Cirrhosis or liver cancer can result from a long-term infection. In 7-53% of cases, liver enzymes assessed from blood samples are normal. About half of those infected develop fatty liver abnormalities, which are usually visible before cirrhosis occurs. Typically, this alteration affects less than a third of the liver in 80% of cases. Cirrhosis of the liver can cause portal hypertension, ascites (abdominal fluid accumulation), easy bruising or bleeding, varices (enlarged veins, notably in the stomach and oesophagus), jaundice, and hepatic encephalopathy, a cognitive impairment syndrome. More than half of patients with a persistent infection develop ascites at some point.

Occult infection

Sick patients with hepatitis C may appear to be rid of the virus, yet they are still infected. The virus is undetectable with standard testing, but it can be detected with ultra-sensitive diagnostics. The viral genome was first discovered in liver biopsies, but research methodologies include an antibody test for the virus core protein and viral genome discovery after centrifuging the viral particles. There has also been a case of infection with continuously moderately high blood liver enzymes but no antibodies to hepatitis C. Cryptogenic occult infection is the name given to this type of infection.

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