**Hepatitis C FAQ’s**

1. **What is Hepatitis C?**

Hepatitis C is virus carried in the blood (known as a Blood Borne Virus or BBV), It can also be called Hep C or HCV.

Hepatitis C causes inflammation of the liver. When your liver becomes inflamed, it can become damaged and eventually have difficulty carrying out its various and vital functions. Over a long period of time, this can lead to serious liver damage such as cirrhosis or liver cancer.

1. **What is liver cirrhosis?**

Cirrhosis is a term used to describe damage to the liver. It means the liver tissue has become scarred.

1. **How do you get Hep C?**

In Scotland the main way people become infected with the Hep C Virus is by sharing needles and other injecting equipment such as water, filters and syringes. If a person has ever injected drugs and shared equipment- including performance and image enhancing drugs such as anabolic steroids- even if it was many years ago, they could be at risk of having Hepatitis C and should get tested.

There are other ways to get Hepatitis C including sexual transmission, transmission from mother to baby, tattoos, and health care in countries where procedures may not be sterile, blood transfusions before 1991.

1. **How do you feel if you have Hep C?**

There are very few symptoms associated with Hep C. Some people have a lack of energy and feel tired. Others report suffering from “brain fog”. Most people do not know they are infected.

1. **What is the test for Hep C?**

The only way to find out if you have Hep C by performing a blood test.

1. **Where can I be tested?**

You can be tested at your GP practice.

Drug and alcohol support agencies in Grampian also offer testing to their clients

1. **I have recently had a blood test at the Dr’s or hospital- will they have tested for Hep C?**

Not necessarily- routine blood tests for other conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol or anaemia do not test for hepatitis C.

1. **If I have Hep C what happens next?**

If diagnosed with Hep C you will be referred to the Liver Specialist Nurses. The nurses will perform blood tests and a scan to determine what condition your liver is in.

1. **Can Hep C be treated?**

Yes, we are now offering a cure for Hep C. Treatment is very straight forward. You would take tablets daily for between 8-12 weeks depending on your liver health. There are no injections and we do not use Interferon to treat Hepatitis C any more.

1. **Do the tablets have side effects?**

Most people do not feel any side effects. Like all medications there are potential side effects, these include headache and tiredness, however they are not common.

1. **How can I prevent passing on Hep C?**

You can reduce the risk of passing the virus on to others by not sharing razors, toothbrushes, nail scissors and hair clippers. Condoms should be used with sexual partners. If you cut yourself you should cover the cut with a waterproof dressing and if blood spills you should clean it with a weak bleach solution. You will not be able to donate blood or organs.

1. **Do I have to tell people I have Hep C?**

No you don’t, but sometimes telling people may be beneficial to you. It can help reduce the burden and offer increased support. The fact that Hep C is stigmatised can make telling others difficult – there are people that can help. Speak to your doctor, liver nurse or contact The Hepatitis C Trust Helpline: 020 7089 6221.

1. **Important points**

* There only has to be contact once with infected blood for you to contract Hep C.
* If you have had risk at any point in your life you should have a blood test.
* Hep C can be cured
* Don’t be scared.