



## Disease of the Month: Hepatitis C

### What is Hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C (HCV) is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver.
- This infection can cause cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver and liver cancer.

### Who is at risk?

- Anyone who had a transplant, blood transfusion, or received blood products prior to July 1992,
- Intravenous (IV) drug users, even if drug use only occurred once, and
- Patients with kidney disease who are required to undergo blood filtration (hemodialysis).

### The risk of contracting HCV is increased:

1. If you have a sexually transmitted disease with rashes or sores, and
2. If you use infected objects such as:
  - Razors
  - Needles (tattooing, body piercing or acupuncture)

- Toothbrushes
- Nail files
- Barber scissors



### Other risk factors include:

- Frequent exposure to blood products;
- Exposure to blood in the workplace; and
- Higher risk sexual behavior (sex with multiple partners & sexually transmitted diseases).

### How is hepatitis C spread?

- Occurs when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected.
- HCV is also spread through sharing needles or "works" when "shooting" drugs, through needle sticks or sharps exposures on the job; or from an infected mother to her baby during birth.

### What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?

Most people infected with hepatitis C do not have symptoms for years, even decades, following infection. If

symptoms are present, they may appear as:

- Mild flu-like symptoms
- Dark urine
- Light-colored stools
- Jaundice (yellowish eyes and skin)
- Fatigue
- Fever

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms, if present, may appear anywhere from 2 to 26 weeks after exposure.

The average incubation period (time from infection to the appearance of symptoms) is 7 to 9 weeks.

### How serious is Hepatitis C?

HCV positive persons should be evaluated by their doctor for liver disease.

Some individuals with liver damage may develop scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) and liver failure over a period of years.



**TULSA HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

### Special Points of Interest

#### Did you know?

There are approximately 35,000 new cases of Hepatitis C in the United States every year and on average in Tulsa County there are 300 cases of acute and chronic Hepatitis C each year in Tulsa County.

## TIPS: Preventing The Spread of Hepatitis C

The following guidelines are recommended following a positive diagnosis of Hepatitis C to help stay healthy and prevent the spread:

- Consult a doctor for follow-up care and advice.
- Avoid alcohol due to the damaging effect it has on the liver.
- Consult your doctor before taking any medications including over-the-counter, herbal, and

other medications.

- Practice safe sex.
- Cover sores and rashes.
- Never allow anyone to share your toothbrush, razor, or other sharp instruments you have used.
- Avoid sharing chewing gum or pre-chewing food for babies.
- Household surfaces contaminated with your blood or



body fluids should be cleaned with a diluted household bleach solution of 1 cup bleach to 10 cups of cold water.

Currently, there are no vaccines or medications available for the **prevention** of Hepatitis C. There are, however, types of medication available for treatment of the disease. The success of these treatments varies with each patient.

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## CURRENT NEWS

### POSSIBLE RICIN EXPOSURE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working collaboratively with the Southern Nevada Health District's Environmental Health Division, the FBI, and other public health and law enforcement agencies to investigate a case of possible ricin exposure in Las Vegas in a 57 year old man in February 2008.

Preliminary results of environmental testing at laboratories in Nevada have tested positive for ricin. Ricin is a potent biologic toxin that is derived from castor beans.

Exposure to ricin is usually by ingestion or inhalation. Ingestion of ricin typically leads to profuse vomiting and diarrhea, which might be bloody, followed by hypovolemic shock and multisystem organ dysfunction. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms, fever, myalgia, and arthralgia might also be reported. Inhalation of ricin typically leads to cough and respiratory distress followed by pulmonary edema, respiratory failure, and multisystem organ dysfunction. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms of fever, myalgia, and arthralgia might also be reported.

The Tulsa Health Department collects Emergency Room chief complaint data to monitor the emergence of illnesses, such as influenza, in our community. For additional information on THD's county-wide surveillance system please [click here](#)

## REPORTED CASES OF SELECTED DISEASES

Disease	Tulsa County		Oklahoma	
	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2008	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2007	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2008	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2007
<i>Campylobacter</i>	11	4	36	47
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	0	0	2	2
<i>Giardia</i>	1	2	13	25
Hepatitis A	1	0	1	3
Hepatitis B (acute & chronic)	0	19	12	2
Hepatitis C (acute & past/present)	29	33	168	1
Rabies (Animal)	0	0	5	11
Salmonella	5	5	38	47
Shigella	3	4	21	7

Discrepancies between state and county numbers may result from cases being reported directly to the county. Also, Tulsa County totals for Hepatitis B includes perinatal cases.

## Surveillance Report

