

HEP



Get Tested. Get Treated. **Get Cured.**

HEPATITIS

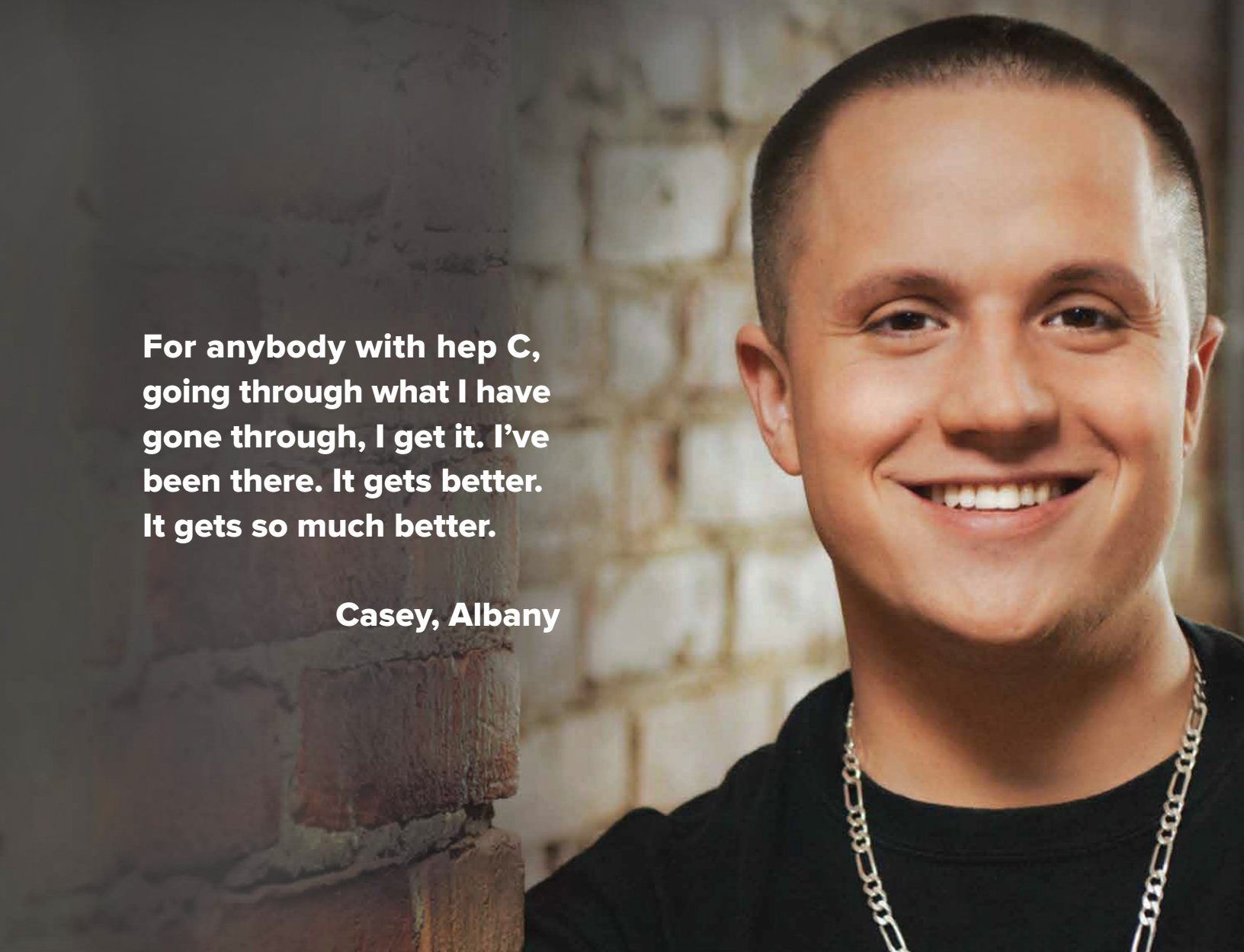
Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It is spread by contact with infected blood. This can happen through:

- Shared equipment that is used to prepare and inject, or to snort drugs. This includes needles, syringes, cookers, cotton, water, or straws.
- Tattoos or body piercing in an unlicensed or informal setting, such as on the street or in jail.
- Sharing of personal items that may come in contact with blood, like toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers or glucose monitors.
- Childbirth when the pregnant person has hepatitis C.

Most people with hepatitis C have no symptoms and do not know they have hepatitis C. Left untreated, hepatitis C can cause serious liver damage, liver failure, liver cancer, and death. Unlike hepatitis A and B, there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C. However, early diagnosis and timely access to care and treatment can prevent liver damage. Hepatitis C is treatable and curable.

Hepatitis C and HIV Coinfection

About one quarter of people living with HIV also have hepatitis C. Liver disease progresses more quickly in a person with HIV and hepatitis C. Among people with HIV who use drugs, 50-90% have coinfection with hepatitis C. Men with HIV who have sex with men also appear to be at higher risk for hepatitis C infection. This could be due to rough sex or anal sex where blood is present. People with HIV can be successfully treated and cured for hepatitis C. People who are taking PrEP to prevent HIV infection, may also be at risk for hepatitis C. They should be screened every year for hepatitis C.



**For anybody with hep C,
going through what I have
gone through, I get it. I've
been there. It gets better.
It gets so much better.**

Casey, Albany

HEPATITIS Screening

**Getting tested is the only way to know if you have hepatitis C.
You should get tested for hepatitis C if you:**

- Are 18 years and older. Get tested at least once.
- Are pregnant. Get tested during each pregnancy.
- Injected drugs, even just once many years ago.
- Have HIV.
- Received donated blood or organs before 1992.
- Received clotting factor before 1987.
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick or injury with a sharp object.
- Were ever on long-term dialysis.
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail.
- Snorted drugs.

Hepatitis C Antibody Test

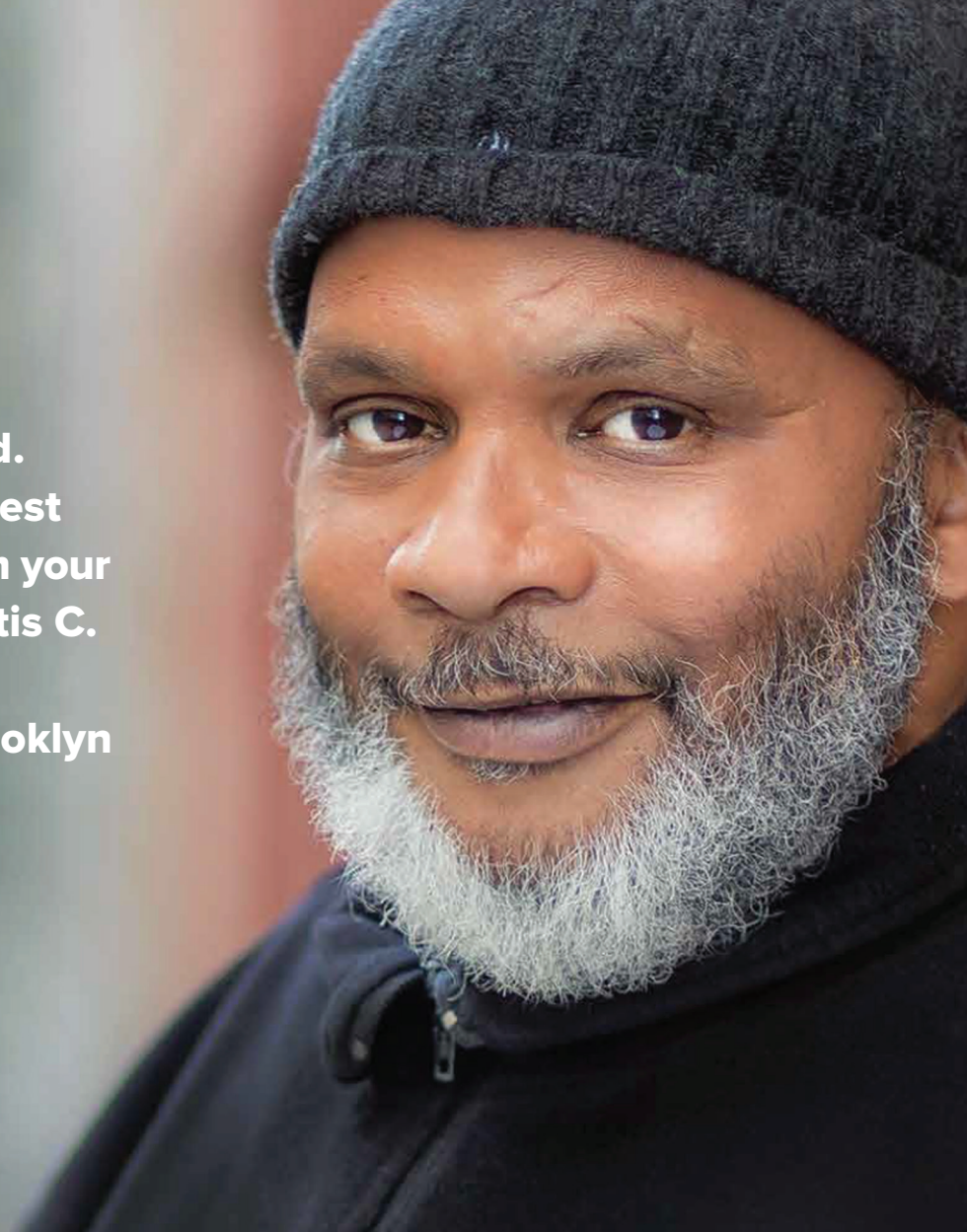
The first test you need to determine if you have hepatitis C is a hepatitis C antibody test. This is a blood test that looks for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. The test can be done by collecting a blood sample and sending it to a lab. Or, it can be done by a finger stick using a hepatitis C rapid antibody test. The hepatitis C antibody test will tell you if you have ever had hepatitis C. It will not tell you if you have hepatitis C now.

A hepatitis C antibody test result can be either Nonreactive/Negative or Reactive/Positive.

- **A nonreactive or negative antibody test** means that you do not have hepatitis C infection. However, if you took part in risky behavior, such as sharing injection drug equipment in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.
- **A reactive or positive antibody test** means that you have antibodies to hepatitis C in your blood. You were exposed to hepatitis C at one time. You may have hepatitis C. You will need a second test to know for sure.

**It's not complicated.
Get a simple blood test
and information from your
doctor about hepatitis C.**

Kenneth, Brooklyn



HEPATITIS Diagnosis

If your hepatitis C antibody test is reactive, a second test is needed to diagnose and determine if you now have hepatitis C. This second test is called an hepatitis C ribonucleic acid (RNA) test, or hepatitis C viral load test. The RNA test checks for the presence of hepatitis C virus in your blood. The test result can either be undetectable or detectable. The results may also be reported as a viral load or the amount of hepatitis C virus in your blood.

- An ‘undetectable’ test result means you don’t have virus in your blood and do not have hepatitis C.
- A ‘detectable’ test result means that you have hepatitis C virus in your blood and you have hepatitis C infection.

Benefits of Early Diagnosis of Hepatitis C


Once you learn that you have hepatitis C, talk to your health care provider. Don’t wait until you feel sick to get treated. Early diagnosis and medical care are key to better health. Even before starting treatment, there's a lot you can do to stay healthy and protect your liver from damage.

- Avoid alcohol or reduce your intake.
- Make sure you are vaccinated against hepatitis A and B.
- Eat healthy, exercise, and get enough rest.
- See your health care provider for regular checkups.
- Talk with your health care provider before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medication, supplements, or vitamins.

Minimize the Risk of Passing Hepatitis C to Others

- If you inject drugs, do it as safely as you can.
- Avoid sharing any equipment for injection drug use, such as syringes, ties, cottons, cookers, straws. etc.
- Avoid sharing personal care items that may have blood on them, such as razors, toothbrushes, and nail clippers.
- Practice safer sex by using condoms or dental dams. Avoid sex that may cause bleeding or tearing.

Hepatitis C is not spread through casual contact such as: sneezing, coughing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses.



**It doesn't matter how you
got hep C. Let's help one
another and make sure
everybody gets cured.**


Ronni, Manhattan

HEPATITIS Care and Treatment

If you learn that you have hepatitis C, talk with your health care provider about treatment. Almost everyone can be cured with the medications that are now available. This is true even if you were refused treatment in the past or had treatment that didn't work. Most people can even be treated for hepatitis C by their regular primary care provider.

Hepatitis C Treatment

- Treatment helps your body get rid of the hepatitis C virus. This is called a sustained viral response or SVR. It is considered a cure. It reduces your risk of liver damage and improves your overall health.
- Treatment is recommended for most people with hepatitis C. This includes people who are actively using drugs, those who have HIV, or those who have advanced liver disease.
- Hepatitis C treatment is easy to take – often one dose once a day for 8 to 12 weeks – and has few side effects.
- Three months (or 12 weeks) after you finish taking your hepatitis C treatment, your health care provider will repeat a hepatitis C RNA test. This is done to confirm that your treatment was successful.
- If the test does not detect hepatitis C virus in your blood, you are cured.
- If there is still hepatitis C virus in your blood, you are not cured. Continue to see your health care provider to monitor your liver and discuss the benefit of repeating hepatitis C treatment. A different combination of medication might work for you.
- It's important to know that even if you are successfully treated, you are not protected from getting reinfected with hepatitis C in the future.



**After hep C treatment,
I was cured. I really couldn't
believe it. It changed something
in me and gave me a little bit
more hope I was going to be OK.**

Liza, Buffalo

HEPATITIS Hear Our Stories



Learn how you can help eliminate hep C: health.ny.gov/nycureshepc

To find out more about hepatitis C, or to find a syringe exchange program or a drugstore that sells syringes without a prescription, call 1-800-522-5006 or visit www.health.ny.gov.

If you or someone you care about needs help for drugs, alcohol, or gambling text or call 1-877-8-HOPENY or 1-877-846-7369.

