

# HEALTH GREENVILLE RANCHERIA

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, it's function can be affected. Hepatitis is often caused by a virus, and the most common type of viral hepatitis are A, B, and C.

Let us focus on Hepatitis C (HCV). So, what is HCV? HCV is an unusual disease in that it doesn't immediately present symptoms. In Fact, according to the World Health Organization, approximately 80% of those infected with HCV are asymptomatic, which means, you are a carrier for a disease or infection but experience no symptoms, or don't exhibit symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov recommends you get tested for HCV if born from 1945 to 1965. This is the era of Baby Boomers, one in 30 Baby Boomers has HCV. Many were infected in the 70's and 80's when infection control standards were not what they are today. It is a serious blood-borne disease that has been under the radar. It is not talked about much, so even though it affects millions, many people don't know about it. You can live with it for years, with no symptoms.

HCV history:

- wasn't discovered until 1989.
- donated blood, organ donations, blood transfusions were not screened until 1992.
- Infections each year had been declining since the 1980's, but began to increase again in 2006.
- can be transmitted by small amounts of blood and can live outside the body for up to 3 weeks.
- unsterilized tools at tattoo parlors.
- past recreational drug use.
- less commonly, sharing personal items that have infected blood, such as; razors or toothbrushes.
- each year more people die of HCV than from HIV.
- untreated, can cause liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.
- slowly damages the liver, by the time symptoms do appear. liver damage is often advanced.

Call your primary healthcare provider and discuss options or go to [www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org) to learn more about the ABC's of hepatitis. All Baby Boomers should get tested for HCV. Although no vaccine for HCV is available. Medicines can cure most cases of HCV.



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