



Hep C is a blood-borne virus that can cause long-lasting liver disease. Hep C is spread from person to person through infected blood (even amounts you can't see) getting directly into the bloodstream. For drug users this means that sharing rolled bills for snorting or injection equipment for banging is a very risky activity. Read on to learn more about Hep C, and how, with your own straw, you can snort safer.



Up Yer Nose! The Lowdown on Transmission
Snorting drugs can damage the inside lining of your nose causing it to become raw and irritated, even more so if you've been snorting repeatedly throughout the night. This can spread Hep C from one user to another. Here's how:



When snorting, tiny blood vessels inside the nose can break and cause small amounts of blood to leak out (even if you can't see any!). This blood gets transferred from the nose to the snorting device, then passed to the next person who uses the same rolled-up bill, straw, etc. If you or someone you share bills or straws with has Hep C, you risk infecting someone or becoming infected yourself.

The Rinse Out Special

It's a wise idea to care for your nose! Rinsing the inside of your nose both before and after railing can decrease the amount of irritation you experience while snorting your drugs. It also means that you're more likely to have two healthy nostrils rather than one big one, as some drugs can eat away at the division between your nostrils. By dabbing your fingers in water and sniffing it up your nose until you feel it run down your throat, you will help to move the drugs along and prevent nasal damage. After long nights of railing, you may want to consider applying Vitamin E oil to the inside of your nose in order to aid in the healing process.



Even if your nose doesn't look or feel raw inside -- avoid sharing straws or bills!

On the Hep

Most people who are infected with Hep C don't show symptoms for the first while. Symptoms may not show up for many years. This is where you can run into problems, because it means that you may continue doing what you're doing -- sharing bills and straws -- while infecting others, and perhaps not keeping your health in check.

If symptoms appear, they could include:






- ☞ Feeling tired and sick, lack of energy.
- ☞ Poor appetite.
- ☞ Pain under the rib cage on the right side.
- ☞ Dark-coloured piss and light-coloured shit.
- ☞ Skin and the whites of the eyes may turn yellow.

Keepin' It Under Control

The good news is that Hep C is manageable. Although there is no vaccine for Hep C, many people live well with it. Lifestyle changes can help to manage chronic symptoms such as fatigue and depression. Eating well and chilling out on drug and alcohol consumption can help to keep the liver healthier. There is also medication available to treat the disease.



Mind Ya'Self

-  Be considerate -- Share your knowledge on safer snorting with your friends.
-  Avoid sharing bills/straws when snorting. Stick to your own straw and personal devices.
-  Avoid sharing toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers, injection equipment (spoons, filters, needles), piercing or tattooing equipment (including ink) -- anything that could provide a direct route for the virus to enter your bloodstream.
-  Get vaccinated for Hep A and B, since these are two liver diseases that you can protect yourself from.
-  Take care of your nostrils! They're the only ones you've got!

Getting Tested for Hep C



If you suspect that you have been infected, you may want to consider being tested for Hep C.

While Hep C tests are available, they aren't entirely anonymous. Some clinics will not ask for ID but you will need to provide a name (any name! IE. Mr. MDMA), in order to get your test results.

Where to Go for Hep C Testing

Community Health Centres:

Most CHCs can provide testing either through an appointment or through a drop-in clinic if there is one provided.

A Family Doctor:

A general practitioner (GP) can provide these tests.

Walk-in Clinics:

Testing for Hep C is confidential (but not anonymous) and is available at most clinics and at some Anonymous HIV Testing clinics.

For more info on Hep C and Safer Partying, contact:



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www.trippproject.ca



1-800-263-1638
www.hepcinfo.ca

Production of this booklet has been made possible with the support of the Hepatitis C Secretariat, Ontario. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.