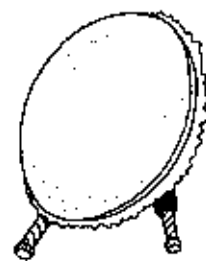


## Information for Inuit Community Members

### Fact Sheet Hepatitis C Testing



## **TESTING FOR HEPATITIS C**

### **What is Hepatitis C testing?**

Hepatitis C testing tells you whether you are infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). This virus infects your liver and can cause severe liver damage and liver cancer. Everyone should be tested for Hepatitis C, especially if you have ever shared needles during tattooing or shared equipment when using street drugs.

When Hepatitis C damages the liver, blood tests for “liver enzymes” may be higher than normal. Hepatitis C can cause liver damage even if your enzyme tests are normal.

### **How do I get tested for Hepatitis C?**

Blood tests for Hepatitis C include Hepatitis C antibody and viral load tests. These are similar to the HIV antibody and viral load tests (See Fact Sheets on these topics). Hepatitis C viral loads can often be in the millions. They don't predict the path of the disease the way HIV viral loads do. The Hepatitis C antibody test may not detect Hepatitis C infection in about 20% of people with both HIV and Hepatitis C. People with HIV and high liver enzymes should consider getting a Hepatitis C viral load test.

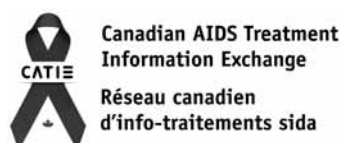
Some doctors do a test called a biopsy to check for liver damage. Liver cells are collected using a thin needle. They are studied using a microscope. A biopsy is the best way to know if your liver has been damaged.

### **When should I get tested?**

If you become infected with Hepatitis C, it could take up to six months for the test to show that you have Hepatitis C. If you think you were exposed to Hepatitis C, you should wait at least this long before being tested. During this “window period”, even if the test gives a negative result, but you are in fact infected, you could still transmit the Hepatitis C virus to others. So it is important to continue to practise safer sex and not share needles.

### **What does it mean if I test positive?**

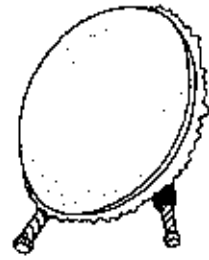
A positive test result means that you have tested positive for Hepatitis C. You will get your test result from a doctor or nurse or CHR who should tell you what to expect, and where to get health services and emotional support.



## **Information for Inuit Community Members**

### **Fact Sheet Hepatitis C Testing**

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Testing positive does **not** mean that you will get sick right away. Many people who test positive for Hepatitis C stay healthy for many decades, even if they do not start taking medication right away.

If you test negative and you have not been exposed to Hepatitis C for at least six months, you are not infected with Hepatitis C. Continue to protect yourself from Hepatitis C by always using a condom and never sharing any equipment when using drugs (including needles, pipes, straws and other snorting apparatus.)

#### **Can I keep my test results confidential?**

In the south you do not have to give your name when you are tested at a public health office, or when you receive the test results. This service is often not available at Northern Health clinics or at your doctor's office and your name will be reported to Health Canada. However, neither the government nor your doctor is allowed to tell anyone else about your test results. Your test results will remain confidential.

