

Table 2. Risk Factors for Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Infection

HIGH RISK OF HCV INFECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH:

- Any history of injection drug use
- Contaminated blood or blood products or organ transplantation before July 1990
- Incarceration
- Needlestick or sharp injuries
- Procedures (e.g., injection, vaccination, surgery, transfusion, ceremonial rituals) involving reuse or sharing of contaminated equipment in parts of the world with high HCV prevalence
- Nonsterile contaminated tattooing or body piercing equipment
- Receiving hemodialysis
- Sharing personal items contaminated with blood with an HCV-infected person (e.g., razors, nail clippers, toothbrush)
- Sharing contaminated intranasal cocaine equipment
- Hepatitis B virus infection
- HIV infection
- Children born to mother with HCV infection*
- Undiagnosed liver disease

MODERATE RISK OF HCV INFECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH:

- A sexual partner with HCV
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted infection, including HIV and lymphogranuloma venereum
- Traumatic sex that involves the potential for mucosal tearing (sex toys, fisting)
- Vaginal sex during menstruation

TRANSMISSION OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH:

- Coughing
- Food
- Water
- Sharing eating utensils
- Hugging or kissing
- Shaking hands
- Toilet seats
- Other casual contact
- Breastfeeding (unless nipples are cracked and bleeding)
- Oral sex (unless blood exposure is involved)

* Pregnancy is not contraindicated, but fetal scalp monitoring or prolonged labor after rupture of membrane should be avoided. Interferon and ribavirin are contraindicated during pregnancy. Whether C-sections prevent vertical transmission remains unknown.

Used with permission from: Wong T, Lee SS. Hepatitis C: A review for primary care physicians. *CMAJ* 2006;174:649-659.