

TATTOOING, BODY PIERCING and HEPATITIS C

know the risks!

Hepatitis C is **not** spread by casual contact such as hugging, kissing, shaking hands or being around someone who is sneezing or coughing.



WHAT DOES HEPATITIS C HAVE TO DO WITH ME AS A YOUNG PERSON?

Hepatitis C can happen to anyone, not just people living in the city or people using drugs. Hepatitis C is a virus that is spread by blood to blood contact. This can include sharing needles used for tattoos and piercings, and in some situations by having unprotected sex.

What is hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV).
- You can get hepatitis C when infected blood from someone else goes into your bloodstream. Once inside, it infects your liver and causes damage to this very important body part.
- The hepatitis C virus can live on surfaces like a toothbrush or a razor blade for up to three weeks.

Why do I need my liver?

- We need our liver to live.
- The liver works to clean our body.
- The liver also helps us digest food and give us energy.
- If your liver is sick, your whole body can feel sick.

What are the risk factors?

- Using unsterile equipment for injecting or snorting drugs, tattooing and/or body piercing.
- Sharing personal care items like razors, scissors, nail clippers or tooth brushes with someone who has hepatitis C.
- Unprotected sexual activity where there may be blood from a person with hepatitis C.

TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING

Tattoos and body piercings can be so cool, but make sure you do it safely. Many times, tattoos and body piercings are done in the spur of the moment. Think carefully before getting a tattoo or body piercing.

Ask yourself:

- Is new equipment, for example a needle or tattooing gun, being used?
- If not, is the equipment sterile?
- Is the area clean?
- Is the artist wearing gloves?

Did you know that many people get hepatitis C and don't even know they have it for many years?

Be aware that bleach kills HIV, but does not kill hepatitis C.

Reduce the risks of getting hepatitis C

- If you can, go see an artist who is licensed for your tattoo or piercing.

- Don't use a needle or ink that other people have used.
- Don't share body jewelry.

GETTING TESTED

- Youth who think they are at risk should talk to their health care provider about getting tested.
- Hepatitis C can have no symptoms for up to 20 years.
- All it takes to know if you have it is a simple blood test. Ask your health care provider.
- If you don't have hepatitis C, that's great! There are simple things you can do to keep your risk low.
- If you have hepatitis C there are many treatments available. The good news is that it can be treated and in many cases cured. Talk to your health care provider about treatment options!

If you have any questions or would like to know more, please go see your health care provider.

Know your status – get tested!

For more information visit:
www.pauktuutit.ca/health

REMEMBER >>> There are many ways hepatitis C can get inside the body. Any instrument or object like a needle or metal point used for tattooing or body piercing can spread the virus. The hepatitis C virus can also live in ink and ink pots. Just because your tattoo or piecing has healed well doesn't necessarily mean that you did not get hepatitis C.

