Is there any Treatment?

Hepatitis C is treated with a drug called interferon, usually in combination with ribavirin capsules. Interferon is given by an injection under the skin, either once or three times a week. Ribavirin capsules are taken in two or three doses daily. Normally treatment lasts for a period of six months and is effective in nearly 75 percent of patients. If the treatment is effective, the liver tests become normal and the virus disappears from the blood i.e. the PCR test becomes negative. Some patients may show a relapse of the infection after successful treatment because the virus may not have totally eliminated from the body. Such patients may require to be treated again.

Both interferon and ribavirin may have temporary side effects and their doses may need to be adjusted. Therefore regular visits to the treating doctor are essential for proper treatment.

How can we stop the spread of Hepatitis C?

Please take the following precautionary measures to protect yourself and others from getting infected with Hepatitis C virus:

- Make sure your doctor or nurse uses a sterilized disposable (single use) needle for administering injections.
- Do not share drug needles with anyone. Wear gloves if you have to touch anyone's blood.
- Have safe sex and restrict yourself to your life partner.
- Do not use an infected person's toothbrush, razor or anything else that could have blood on it (this includes razors used at barber's shop).
- If you get a tattoo or body piercing, make sure it is done with clean tools.

If you have Hepatitis C, do not donate your blood or plasma. The person who receives it could become infected with the virus.

Hepatitis C Vaccine

There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.
What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that infects the liver and can cause liver disease. Hepatitis C is serious for some persons, but not for others. Most persons who get Hepatitis C carry the virus for the rest of their lives (chronic infection). Most of these persons have some liver damage, but many do not feel sick from the disease. Some persons with liver damage due to Hepatitis C may develop cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver and liver failure, which may take many years to develop. Others have no long-term effects.

You need a healthy liver. The liver does many things to keep you alive. The liver fights infections and stops bleeding. It removes drugs and other poisons from your blood. The liver also stores energy and other essential nutrients for when you need them.

How Does Hepatitis C Spread?

Hepatitis C is spread by contact with an infected person’s blood.

You Could Get Hepatitis C by:

- Transfusion of unscreened blood for Hepatitis C virus
- Accidental inoculation with a needle that has infected blood in it (hospital workers can get Hepatitis C this way)
- Having sex with an infected person, especially if you or your partner has other sexually transmitted diseases
- Being born to a mother with Hepatitis C
- Getting a tattoo or body piercing with non sterilized or dirty tools.

Hepatitis C Does not Spread by:

- Shaking hands with an infected person
- Hugging, coughing or sneezing
- Kissing an infected person
- Casual contact or sitting next to an infected person
- Breast feeding
- Food or water

What Damage can Hepatitis C do?

Chronic Hepatitis C virus infection causes ongoing inflammation in the liver, which gradually damages the liver. However, this is a very slow process and severe liver damage develops only if the infection continues for more than 20 years. Nearly 40 percent patients may eventually develop liver cirrhosis if the infection persists for such a long time, and some of these patients may also develop liver cancer.

What are the Symptoms of Chronic Hepatitis C?

Most patients with chronic Hepatitis C do not have symptoms in the initial stages of the infection, and therefore, the disease is difficult to diagnose early.

However, some people with Hepatitis C feel like they have the flu, therefore, they might experience the following symptoms:

- Feel tired
- Have a fever
- Feel sick in your stomach
- Not want to eat

Additionally, may also experience the followings:

- Dark yellow urine
- Light-coloured stools
- Yellowish eyes and skin

If you have symptoms or think you might have Hepatitis C consult a doctor, immediately.

What are the Tests for Hepatitis C?

There are many tests which assist doctors in diagnosing Hepatitis C virus infection and in assessing liver damage. Some of the important tests are as follows:

1. Liver function test: Blood tests which give an estimate
2. Hepatitis C virus antibody
3. Hepatitis C virus PCR
4. Hepatitis C virus Genotype
5. Ultrasound scan of the liver

The Doctor may also Do a Liver Biopsy

A biopsy is a simple test. The doctor removes a tiny piece of your liver through a needle. The doctor checks the piece of liver for signs of Hepatitis C and liver damage.