



Hepatitis C and Known Risks

What is hepatitis C (HCV)?

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that attacks the liver. If left untreated, hepatitis C can cause chronic liver disease, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer, and ultimately death. The majority of those infected will experience no symptoms at the time of infection, and the majority of persons infected with hepatitis C are unaware of their infection.

What are the risk factors for HCV?

You have an increased risk of hepatitis C infection if you:

- ▶▶ Were born between 1945 and 1965
- ▶▶ Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992
- ▶▶ Received a blood product for clotting problems made before 1987
- ▶▶ Shared needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs (past or present)
- ▶▶ Received a needlestick injury in a health care setting
- ▶▶ Were born to a mother who had hepatitis C at the time of your birth
- ▶▶ Received body piercings or tattoos done in an unsafe environment, i.e., using non-sterile equipment
- ▶▶ Were a hemodialysis patient or person who spent many years on dialysis for kidney failure
- ▶▶ Are infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

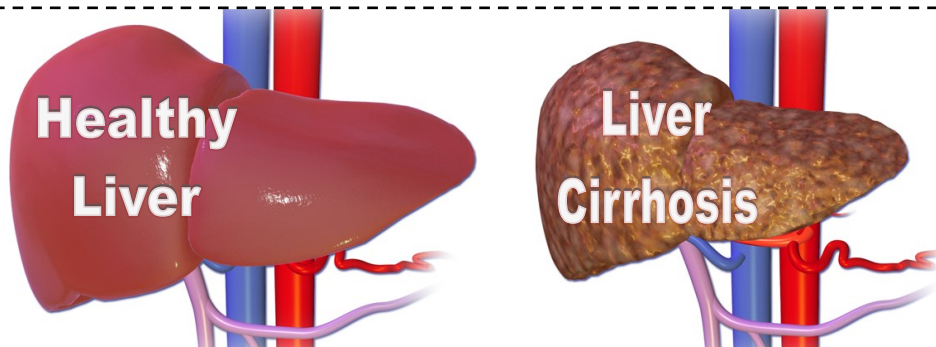
Less common risks include:

- ▶▶ Having sexual contact with a person who is infected with the hepatitis C virus
- ▶▶ Sharing personal care items, such as razors or toothbrushes, that may have come in contact with the blood of an infected person



Why test for HCV?

You can have hepatitis C and not even know it. Hepatitis C is a silent disease that may have few or no symptoms, so the only way to know is to get tested, especially if you have any risk factors. Even if you have no symptoms, you can still spread the disease, and, if left untreated, hepatitis C is associated with complications such as fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular cancer and may require a liver transplant. Hepatitis C is the top reason for liver transplants in the U.S. Therefore, screening is important to prevent the spread of hepatitis C and promote clinical interventions before the occurrence of late stages of disease, which may be difficult and costly to treat and may decrease life expectancy.



What are the symptoms of HCV?

Approximately 70%–80% of people with acute hepatitis C do not have any symptoms. Some people, however, can experience mild to severe symptoms soon after being infected, including:

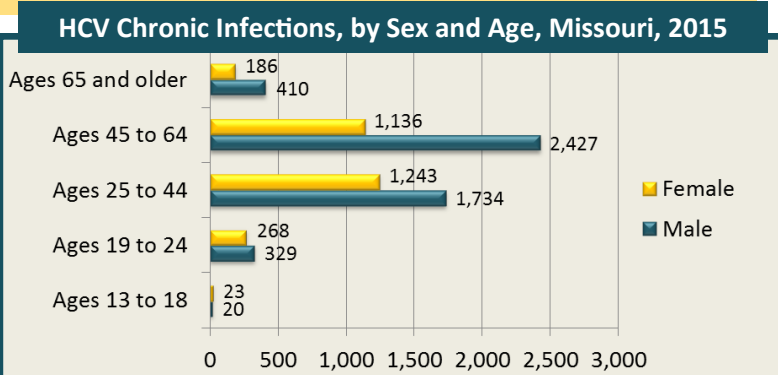
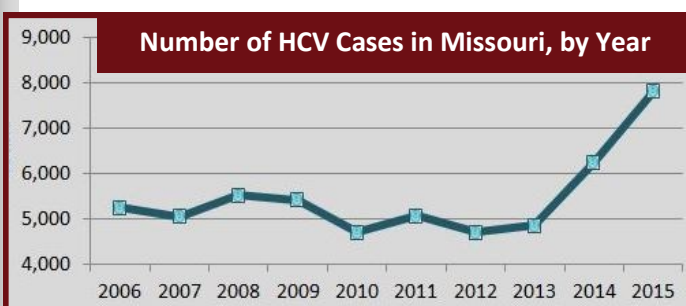
- ▶▶Fever ▶▶Fatigue ▶▶Loss of appetite ▶▶Nausea ▶▶Vomiting ▶▶Abdominal pain ▶▶Dark urine
- ▶▶Clay-colored bowel movements ▶▶Joint pain ▶▶Jaundice (yellow color in the skin or eyes)

A person can still spread the virus to others even if no symptoms are present. Many people infected with hepatitis C do not know they have the disease.

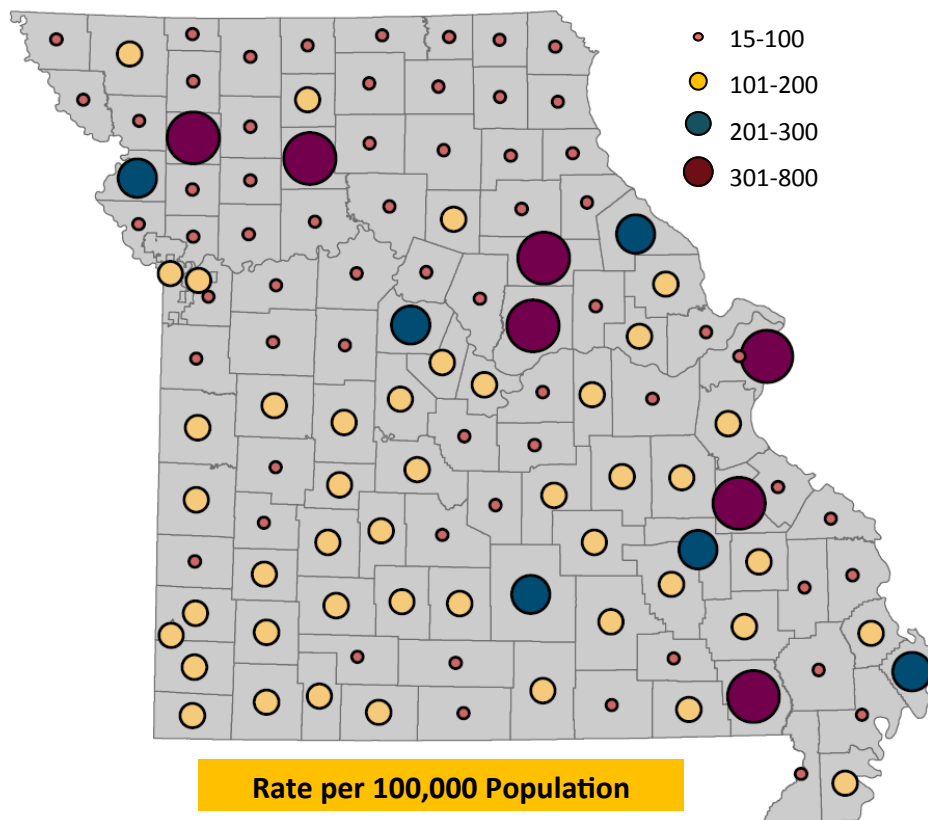
Hepatitis C Missouri Data

Is HCV present in Missouri?

- ▶ Among the 40 states that reported hepatitis C conditions to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2014, Missouri and 12 other states accounted for 76.4% of all reported cases.
- ▶ In 2015, Missouri reported 7,795 cases of chronic hepatitis C. This is an increase of 24.2% from the 6,278 cases reported in 2014.
- ▶ Missouri residents aged 45 to 64 years represent the highest percentage of all reported chronic hepatitis C infections at 45.7%. The second highest percentage of cases reported was for the group aged 25 to 44 years, at 38.2%.
- ▶ At least one new case of chronic hepatitis C was reported from every county or jurisdiction in Missouri in 2015.
- ▶ In 2015, Missouri reported eight acute hepatitis C cases to CDC, resulting in an incidence rate of 0.1 per 100,000 population. This is much lower than the 2014 national average of 0.7 cases per 100,000 population, which is the most recent national rate available. CDC estimates that the actual national number of acute hepatitis C cases is 13.9 times greater than the number reported.



Reported Hepatitis C Rates, 2015



This project was funded by the **Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)** grant *Building State/Territorial Health Department Capacity to Develop & Utilize Viral Hepatitis Epidemiologic Profiles* and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

All sources referenced in this fact sheet are fully cited in the *Epidemiologic Profile of Viral Hepatitis in Missouri-2015*, which is available at <http://health.mo.gov/data/hivstdaids/data.php>

Publication Date: May 2017