

How is Hepatitis C transmitted?

- By blood to blood contact – meaning that the blood of a person already infected with the virus must leave their body and enter the blood stream of another person.
- Hepatitis C usually enters the body of another person via a rupture or opening in the skin such as an injection site.
- For transmission to occur, the virus must be concentrated enough (viral load) to present a threat of infection.
- In Australia the greatest risk of transmission is through the sharing and reusing of all injecting equipment. Surfaces used for mixing up and using drugs, disposal containers, hands and puncture sites can become contaminated with blood during the injecting process and pose a risk for the transmission of hepatitis C.
- Tattooing and body piercing with equipment that has been contaminated with blood can transmit hepatitis C.
- Hepatitis C has been found in body fluids other than blood, but the viral load is thought to be too low for transmission to occur.
- Hepatitis C is not classified as a sexually transmitted infection due to the very low risk of infection through sexual contact. Hepatitis C is transmitted through blood to blood contact. Therefore there is a risk of transmission during sex if blood is present.
- Whether hepatitis C is transmitted depends on:
 - The susceptibility of the recipient;
 - The viral load or concentration of the virus in the blood;
 - Amount of blood involved.
- Microscopic amounts of blood not visible to the human eye can transmit hepatitis C.
- There is no evidence to show that people living with hepatitis C transmit the virus to others that they live with by sharing cups, toilets etc. The sharing of tooth brushes and razors which are contaminated with infected blood do pose a low transmission risk.