Hepatitis C symptoms

- Symptoms of hepatitis C are not always obvious.
- People often dismiss symptoms as just part of getting older.
- Any ongoing symptoms should be checked by a medical practitioner.

Because hepatitis C causes inflammation of your liver, it can’t always function properly to remove toxins from the blood, store essential minerals, help blood to clot, and convert blood sugar to energy.

Common symptoms of hepatitis C

While symptoms of hepatitis C infection are not always obvious, here is a list of the most likely effects of the virus.

Fatigue and sleep problems

Fatigue means feeling very tired and lacking energy even after a full night’s sleep. Sleep problems include difficulty falling asleep, waking up a lot, or sleeping too much (eight hours sleep per night is generally enough for an adult).

Flu-like aches and pains

These can come and go and include fever, chills, headaches, tiredness and muscle or joint pain. They usually last for a week or less but can last longer.

Mood swings, anxiety and depression

Because the liver processes hormones, hep C can cause mood swings or other symptoms such as anxiety, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, irritability, lack of interest in usual activities, periods of sadness or brain fog (difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating and expressing words).

Feeling sick, poor appetite and indigestion

Hep C can make you feel sick in the stomach (nausea), which can then affect your appetite. Although there is usually no vomiting, it can be very uncomfortable.

Skin rashes and itchy skin

These may come and go and include itchiness, blisters, white spots, tightened skin, spider web patterns and purple patches. They usually occur on the palms of hands, soles of the feet, general skin areas and/or inside the mouth.

Dry eyes

This can be due to inflammation of the glands that produce tears.

Dry mouth and mouth ulcers

These symptoms can lead to bad breath, tooth decay, cracked lips, sore mouth and throat. It can also cause difficulty eating, swallowing and tooth sensitivity.

Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes (non-insulin dependent) is more common among people with hep C than the general population. It can lead to nerve damage, disease of the kidneys and heart, eye disorders, stroke and serious skin ulcers.
Less Common Symptoms

These include blood, kidney and skin conditions, and disorders of the lymph and nervous systems.

Things to consider

All of the above symptoms can also be caused by other health problems. Gender, health history, eating habits, lifestyle, age, stress levels, and alcohol and drug intake (whether prescribed or illicit) can also affect how you experience living with hep C.

In some cases, a person with hep C can keep feeling well while their liver is becoming more damaged. In other cases, hep C symptoms can mask the symptoms of other health problems.

Finally, symptoms of hep C don’t always get worse; and they sometimes appear in clusters (several at once).

So, it is of vital importance that you talk to your doctor or specialist for more information.

References:

Journal article – Frontiers in Endocrinology
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4568414/