

Hepatitis C and Breastfeeding

Hep C is the short name for **hepatitis C**, a blood disease that can hurt your liver.

Should I breastfeed if I have hep C?

- Yes! It's safe to breastfeed if you have hep C.
- Breastfeeding is great for your baby. Studies show that babies who breastfeed get sick less often. They also have less risk of being overweight and getting diabetes or childhood cancers. They tend to be smarter, too.
- There may be a tiny bit of hep C in your breast milk, but it **won't** make your baby sick.

Don't breastfeed *if*:

- ✗ Your nipples are cracked or bleeding. Pump and **throw away** your breast milk until your nipples heal. It's important to pump during this time so that your body keeps making milk.
- ✗ You are using street drugs. Street drugs in your body **will** get into your breast milk and hurt your baby.

How do people get hep C?

Most people get hep C from:

- Shooting drugs with shared syringes or needles, OR
- Getting a homemade tattoo with dirty tools or ink

It is less likely to get hep C from:

- Having sex with someone who has hep C
- Sharing personal items such as razors or toothbrushes

Hep C does **not** spread by hugging or holding hands. It **doesn't** spread by sharing spoons, forks, or drinking glasses either.



Breastfeeding is good for your baby, even if you have hep C.



What if my baby has hep C?

- Only an antibody test can show if your child has hep C. Take your child to get the test at 18 months old. The test may **not** work before that.
- Most children with hep C grow up healthy and normal. But your child may need treatment later. See a child's hepatitis specialist.



Most children with hep C grow up healthy and normal.

Is there a cure for hep C?

There are some new treatments for hep C. These treatments have cured a lot of patients.

You may be able to get treatment if:

- You have **not** used street drugs for at least 6 months and are healthy.
- You are **not** pregnant or breastfeeding.

Talk to your provider about treatment **after** your baby is weaned.

Questions? Call your health care provider!



Wait until your baby is 18 months old before testing him for hep C.