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OPIOID USE DISORDER AND HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis means the liver is irritated and inflamed. Several things can cause this including some viruses. One of these viruses is the Hepatitis C Virus (*HCV*). Our patients in medication-assisted recoverySM (*MAR*) frequently discover they have HCV because the virus can be spread when people share drug-using equipment.

Most people infected with HCV don't know they have it. Some people develop vague flu-like symptoms when they first catch it, but it doesn't make them sick enough to seek medical attention. A few lucky people who get infected beat the virus. For most people, however, the virus settles in the liver, and causes different amounts of inflammation. Most of the time, people with HCV don't even know they have it until years, or even decades, have passed. Over years, this inflammation permanently damages the liver and replaces healthy liver with scar tissue.

Over time, there is less and less healthy liver and serious problems can arise. Some cases result in people needing liver transplantation or even death. The good news is that there are now several medications that defeat the virus. Not long ago, most people with HCV lived with it for their whole lives. Now there is a cure.

Your BHG team might recommend that you get tested for HCV. If you do get tested and find out you have it, remember that a cure is available. If you need help, we will assist you in finding a provider with expertise in treating HCV.