

Hepatitis C

Infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV) causes acute and chronic hepatitis C disease. HCV is found in the blood of persons who have disease. Infection can lead to liver damage and sometimes death due to liver breakdown. Nearly five million people in the U. S. are infected with HCV, of whom 3.2 million are chronically infected. Chronic liver disease may develop in up to 70% of chronically infected persons; HCV infection is the leading indication for liver transplant. Currently, 8,000 to 10,000 people die each year in the U.S. from hepatitis C. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.

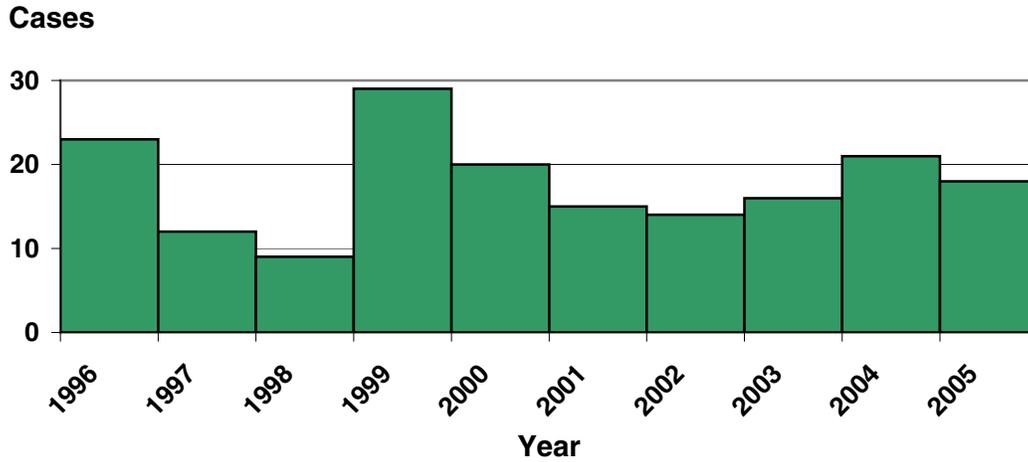
Hepatitis C is spread from one person to another primarily by direct contact with human blood. Most infections are due to illegal injection drug use. The virus can also be transmitted through sexual contact and from infected mothers to their infants at the time of birth. The risk for perinatal HCV transmission is about 4%. If coinfecting with HIV, the risk for perinatal infection increases to about 19%. Since the adoption of routine blood donor screening in 1992, transfusion-associated cases now occur in less than 1 per 2 million transfused units of blood.

The most common signs and symptoms of hepatitis C include: jaundice, fatigue, dark urine, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, and nausea; however, 80% of persons are asymptomatic.

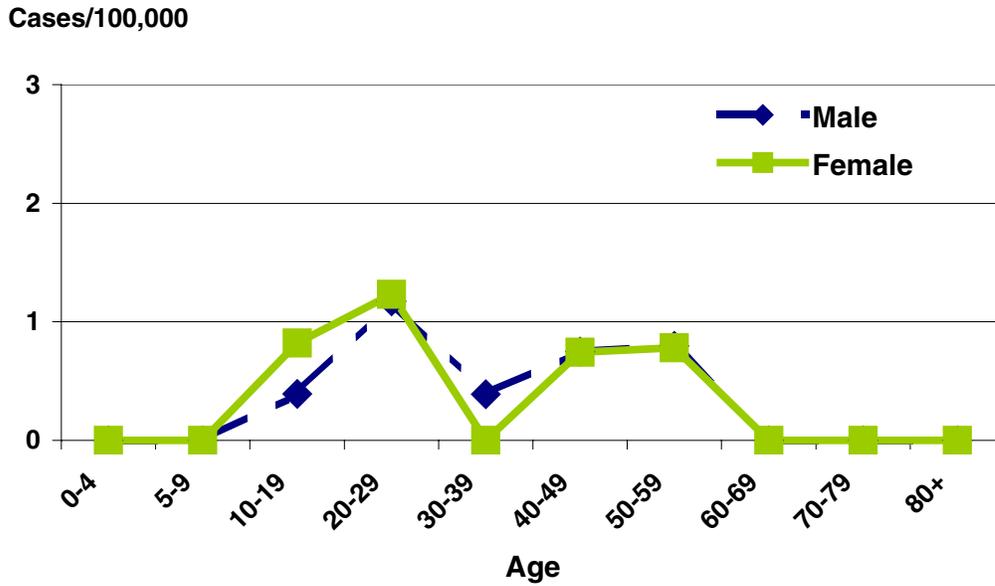
On average, from 1980-2005, there were 50 acute hepatitis C cases reported per year, In 2005, there were 18 cases reported.

Chronic hepatitis C is newly reportable in Oregon as of July 1, 2005. From July-December 2005, 1337 chronic hepatitis C cases were reported by 35 of Oregon's 36 counties; these data do not include Oregon's most populous county, Multnomah. Preliminary analyses of these data show that rates of infection are higher in males than females, and in those aged 40-60 years. These numbers are likely an underestimate of the true incidence as most infections are asymptomatic, and therefore are not diagnosed or reported to public health.

Acute Hepatitis C by Year Oregon, 1996-2005



Acute Hepatitis C by Age and Sex Oregon, 2005



Chronic Hepatitis C by Age and Sex Oregon, 2005

