

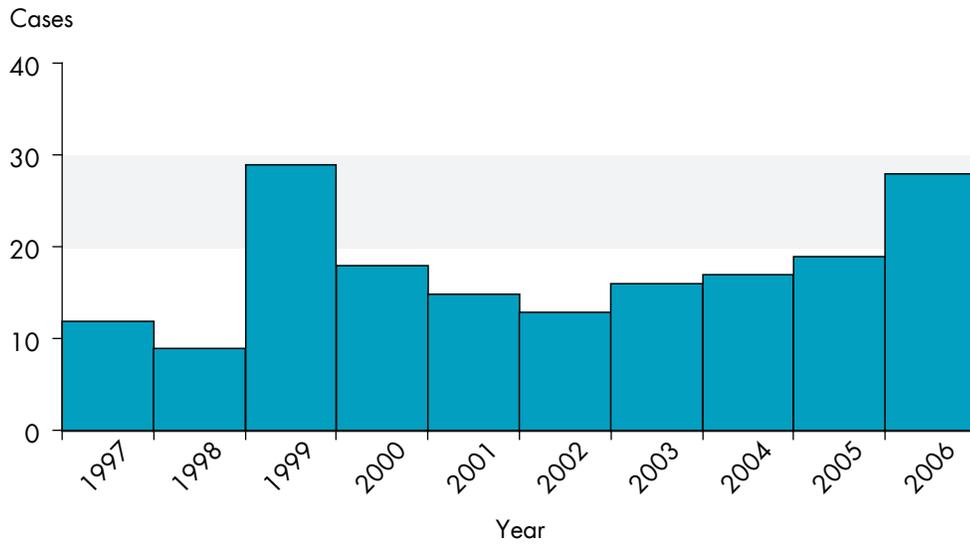
Hepatitis C

Infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV) causes acute and chronic hepatitis C disease. HCV is found in the blood of persons who have the disease. 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 who are infected are asymptomatic. Hepatitis C cases are underreported due to the fact that most persons are asymptomatic and the lack of laboratory testing for acute HCV infection. Hepatitis C can lead to liver damage and sometimes death due to liver breakdown. Nearly 4.1 million persons in the U.S. have been infected with hepatitis C, of whom 3.2 million are chronically infected. Chronic liver disease develops in up to 70% of chronically infected persons. Hepatitis C infection is the leading indication for liver transplant. Currently, 8,000 to 10,000 persons 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 the mother is 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 less than one per 2 million units of blood transfused.

On average, from 1997–2005, there were 17 acute hepatitis C cases reported per year in Oregon. In 2006, 28 were cases reported. In 61% of the cases, patients were less than 40 years of age, and 71% of all cases were female. By far, the most commonly reported risk factor was injection drug use, at a whopping 67% of cases. High-risk sex was reported in 8% of cases. Four percent of cases had no identifiable risk factor.

Acute hepatitis C by year - Oregon, 1997-2006



Acute hepatitis C by age and sex - Oregon, 2006

