



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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Paula F. Nickelson
Director

Michael L. Parson
Governor

February 23, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

I never imagined in my training 25 years ago that we would be able to cure and eradicate hepatitis C. Today we are so fortunate to have the screening, diagnostic tools, and treatments in order to do so. **The elimination of the hepatitis C virus (HCV) is an attainable national and state priority.** Between 2010 and 2021, **the rates of acute HCV infection, however, have more than tripled** among individuals of reproductive age, causing a rise in HCV infections during pregnancy and among infants and children. In November 2023, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated HCV screening recommendations for perinatally-exposed infants and children.**

The CDC recommends:

- Screen patients for HCV during each pregnancy.
 - Individuals with detectable HCV RNA are considered to have current HCV infection.
 - If anti-HCV testing is reactive and HCV RNA results are not available, pregnant persons are considered to have probable HCV infection, and further evaluation is recommended.
- All infants and children born to individuals who had a current or probable HCV infection during pregnancy should be tested for HCV.
 - Test all infants exposed during pregnancy with a nucleic acid test (NAT) for HCV RNA at age 2-6 months.
 - Perinatally exposed Infants and children aged 7–17 months who have not been tested previously should receive a NAT for HCV RNA.
 - Perinatally exposed children aged ≥ 18 months who have not been tested previously should receive an anti-HCV test with a reflex NAT for HCV RNA.
- Perinatally exposed infants and children with undetectable HCV RNA at or after age 2 months do not require further follow-up.
- Infants and children with detectable HCV RNA should be managed in consultation with a health care provider that has expertise in pediatric HCV management.
- See the following for additional information: [CDC Recommendations for Hepatitis C Testing Among Perinatally Exposed Infants and Children -United States 2023 MMWR](#)

The aforementioned recommendations are in addition to the standing CDC recommendations:

- All patients 18 years and older should be screened for hepatitis C at least once in their lifetime.
- Patients with recognized exposures (such as use of injection drugs) should be tested for hepatitis C regardless of age or setting prevalence, and regular periodic testing should continue as long as risk persists.
- See the following for additional information: [CDC Testing Recommendations for Hep C Virus](#)

If you have questions, please contact the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Program at (573) 751-6439 or email hepatitis@health.mo.gov. We look forward to partnering with you to eliminate hepatitis C in Missouri.

Sincerely,

Heidi B. Miller, MD
Chief Medical Officer

PROMOTING HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' vision is optimal health and safety for all Missourians, in all communities, for life.