

# Should you be tested for Hepatitis C?

## Why should you be tested for Hepatitis C?

There are things you can do to fight hepatitis C. Early detection can help. Knowing your hep C status will help prevent transmission to others. Hep C is a curable condition for most people. Better treatments are available with fewer side effects. Even if you do not start treatment, there are a few things you can still do to keep your liver healthy, such as avoiding alcohol and getting vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. Hepatitis C can lead to serious liver damage. Hepatitis C progresses slowly and often has no symptoms. Many people have hepatitis C and don't know it. The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested.

### Get tested for hepatitis C if you...

- Injected drugs, even just once many years ago
- Were born from 1945-1965 (Baby Boomers)\*
- Received donated blood or organs before 1992
- Received clotting factor before 1987
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail
- Are HIV positive
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick or injury with a sharp object
- Were ever on long-term dialysis
- Snorted drugs

\* In New York State, health care providers are required by law to offer anyone born between 1945 and 1965 a test for hepatitis C.

# Hepatitis C Antibody Test

A Hepatitis C Antibody Test is a blood test that looks for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. The test can be done by collecting a blood sample and sending it to a lab, or by a fingerstick using a hepatitis C rapid antibody test. The hepatitis C antibody test will tell you if you have ever been infected with hepatitis C. You may need a second test to know if you are currently infected.

## Hepatitis C Antibody Test Results

### If the test result is **NON-REACTIVE/NEGATIVE**

- A non-reactive or negative antibody test means that you are not currently infected with the hepatitis C virus.
- However, if you have engaged in risky behavior in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.
- Your non-reactive test result does not protect you from getting hepatitis C in the future.

### If the test result is **REACTIVE/POSITIVE**

- A reactive or positive antibody test means that you have antibodies to hepatitis C in your blood.
- You were exposed to hepatitis C at one time. You are probably infected with hepatitis C.
- You will need a second test to know for sure.

### **Take the Second Test. Know for Sure.**

- This second test is called an RNA test. Another name used for this test is a PCR test. The RNA test checks for hepatitis C virus in your blood.
- If you don't have the virus in your blood, this test will come back undetectable. If the test comes back detectable, then you have hepatitis C.

**For a list of free hepatitis C testing sites in New York State go to: [www.health.ny.gov/hepatitis](http://www.health.ny.gov/hepatitis)**