

## WHY SHOULD I PAY ATTENTION TO HEPATITIS C AND MY BABY?

Hepatitis C can impact the overall health of your baby for the rest of his or her life. About 80 percent of children infected with hepatitis C will go on to have long-term infection which, if untreated, can lead to serious liver damage. Most children infected with hepatitis C show few signs of being sick. The only way to know if your baby has hepatitis C is with a blood test.

## WHAT CAN I DO FOR MYSELF IF I HAVE HEPATITIS C?

After your pregnancy, medicine is available to cure your hepatitis C.

Curing your hepatitis C will help protect your future babies from hepatitis C and protect the health of your liver.

Avoid drinking alcohol and review all medications with your doctor, especially if you are also taking medication for HIV or hepatitis B.



## PROTECT YOUR LOVED ONES.

Other people can be infected through contact with your blood or less commonly, through unprotected sex.

Don't share items that can get blood on them such as needles, razors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes.

Be sure to use condoms when having sex.

No vaccine is available to protect either a baby or mother from hepatitis C.

For more information talk to your healthcare provider, call your local health department, or visit these websites:

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/cfaq.htm#overview](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/cfaq.htm#overview)

[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/hcvfaq.htm#g2](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/hcvfaq.htm#g2)

**Take the hepatitis risk assessment:**

[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/)

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# HEPATITIS C AND PREGNANT WOMEN

Have you been exposed to hepatitis C?  
Are you pregnant or planning to have a  
baby?



## WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

**Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease** caused by the hepatitis C virus. The disease can progress for years, even decades, without any symptoms while still causing complications including cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver failure, and liver cancer. Risk factors for hepatitis C exposure include injection drug use, sharing equipment to inject or snort drugs, receiving a blood transfusion before 1992, receiving long-term hemodialysis, or sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis C.

## WHAT IS PERINATAL HEPATITIS C?

If you are pregnant and have hepatitis C, your baby can be infected too. This is known as perinatal hepatitis C. Perinatal hepatitis C is the most common way that children are infected with the disease, as about six percent of babies born to mothers with hepatitis C become infected with hepatitis C. If the mother has HIV or hepatitis B, the chances of the infant getting hepatitis C can increase.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Make sure your doctor knows you have hepatitis C if you have tested positive for the virus. Hepatitis C is curable, but treatments are not currently approved for use during pregnancy. There are ways for you to protect your health and the health of your loved ones. For exposed children, knowing their status is the best way to access care, so make sure they get tested for hepatitis C, too.

## WHEN SHOULD A CHILD BE TESTED FOR HEPATITIS C?

After Two Months of Age	Test for hepatitis C RNA, which determines if your child has evidence of current infection.
After 18 Months of Age	Test for hepatitis C antibody and if positive, follow-up with hepatitis C RNA confirmatory test.

Testing for hepatitis C antibodies if the baby is less than 18 months old is not recommended, as the presence of hepatitis C antibody at this age may be maternal antibodies that were passed from mother to child.

## HOW CAN I GET TESTED FOR HEPATITIS C?

Talk to your medical provider or local health department	Test for hepatitis C antibody and if positive, follow-up with hepatitis C RNA confirmatory test to detect current infection.
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## FAQS FOR MOTHERS WITH HEPATITIS C

### Q. Is it safe to breastfeed my baby?

**A.** Yes! Hepatitis C is not transferred through breast milk; however, you should talk to your doctor if you have cracked or bleeding nipples.

### Q. What kind of delivery should I have?

**A.** You can have a vaginal delivery or a C-section. C-sections or other types of delivery have not been found to prevent perinatal hepatitis C transmission.

### Q. If I hug and kiss my baby, will my baby get hepatitis C?

**A.** No, hepatitis C is NOT transmitted through saliva, coughing, or sneezing. It is spread through contact with blood from or unprotected sex with an infected person. You can hug and kiss your baby without fear of spreading hepatitis C.

