

## What should I know about 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. Knowing your child's hepatitis C status is the best way to access care

## What can I do if I have hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is curable, but treatments are not currently approved for use during pregnancy. After your pregnancy, medicine is available to cure your hepatitis C. Curing your hepatitis C will help protect your future babies from the virus 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.



## How can I protect my loved ones?

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

There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. The best way to prevent hepatitis C is by taking steps to prevent contact with items that can have blood on them such as needles, razors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes.

Be sure to use condoms when having sex.

## 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, there is more risk if you have cracked or bleeding nipples. Talk to your doctor or midwife to determine the best option.

### Q: Does it matter what kind of delivery 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. You can hug and kiss your baby without fear of spreading hepatitis C.

For more information, talk to your health care provider or scan the QR code for more resources:



# Hepatitis C and Pregnancy



Communicable Disease Service

*Information and design modified from the Tennessee Department of Health resource titled "Hepatitis C and Pregnant Women"*

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## What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a serious liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus. For some people, hepatitis C is a short-term illness, but for many it can become a long-term, chronic infection. The disease can progress for years, even decades, without any symptoms while still causing complications including cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver failure, and liver cancer.

## What is perinatal hepatitis C?

If you are pregnant and have hepatitis C, your baby can be exposed to it, too. If your baby is infected, it is called perinatal hepatitis C. Perinatal hepatitis C is the most common way that children are infected with the disease.

- About six percent of babies born to mothers with hepatitis C become infected with the virus.
- If the mother has HIV, the chances of the infant getting hepatitis C can increase.

## How to talk to your doctor or midwife about hepatitis C screening?

Did you know that hepatitis C screening is recommended for every pregnant person at every pregnancy?

You can ask your doctor or midwife to be sure that hepatitis C screening is included in your routine blood tests. If you have tested positive for the virus, make sure your doctor or midwife is aware about your test result.

## How do people get hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is spread through contact with blood from an infected person. This can occur through:

- sharing equipment to prepare, inject, or snort drugs,
- sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis C,
- or through mother-to-baby transmission.

## What do my test results mean?

There are two different types of tests for hepatitis C: Antibody tests and RNA tests.

### Antibody positive (+)

You have been exposed to hepatitis C, but you may not be infected anymore. You need an RNA test to confirm if you are currently infected.

### RNA positive (+)

You are currently infected with hepatitis C.

### Antibody negative (-)

You have not been exposed to and are not infected with hepatitis C.

### RNA negative (-)

You are not currently infected with hepatitis C.

## When should my child be tested for hepatitis C?

Baby's age	Testing Recommendation
Less than 2 months	Testing is not recommended below 2 months.
After 2 months	Test for hepatitis C RNA which determines if your child has evidence of current infection.
After 18 months	Test for hepatitis C antibody and if positive, follow-up with hepatitis C RNA test.

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

