



# CLINICIAN CONSULTATION CENTER

National rapid response for HIV management and bloodborne pathogen exposures.

*This table is a portion of the CCC PEP Quick Guide. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the Quick Guide and not as a standalone document.*

## Testing Recommendations for the Exposed Person

| Recommendations   |  | Baseline testing    | Initial follow-up                                     | Final follow-up                                     |
|---|--|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>PEPline 2017</b>   | HCV+ SP (source person) <sup>1</sup><br>or<br>SP has potential HCV risk factors <sup>1</sup>           | HCV Ab <sup>2</sup> | 6 weeks <sup>3</sup><br><br>HCV RNA (HCV viral load)  | ≥6 months <sup>4,5</sup><br><br>HCV Ab <sup>2</sup> |
|   | SP HCV status unknown <sup>1</sup><br>or<br>SP is known and has no known HCV risk factors <sup>1</sup> |                     | Optional:<br>6 week HCV RNA                           |   |
| <b>CDC 2016</b> <sup>6</sup>  | All source persons <sup>1</sup>  | HCV Ab <sup>2</sup> | ≥3 weeks HCV RNA                                      | Optional: ≥6 month HCV Ab <sup>2</sup>              |
| <b>CDC 2001</b> <sup>7</sup>  |  | HCV Ab and ALT      | If earlier diagnosis is desired: HCV RNA at 4-6 weeks | 4-6 months<br><br>HCV Ab and ALT                    |
| Abbreviations: HCV+ = hepatitis C positive; SP = source person; Ab = antibody; ALT = aminotransferase   |  |                     |   |   |
| <p><b>1</b> For purposes of initial post-exposure management, <u>a source person is considered HCV-positive if either HCV RNA (HCV viral load) or HCV antibody is positive.</u> HCV RNA, when performed on the SP within a few days of the exposure, is the more accurate indicator of infectivity. For the purpose of deciding whether the source can potentially transmit HCV, HCV antibody can be obtained. Positive</p> |  |                     |   |   |



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HCV antibody, however does not always indicate infectivity because: some patients eradicate HCV naturally but retain HCV antibody; and those with active HCV infection can have fluctuating HCV RNA (viral load) as well as undetectable viral load (and are presumably un-infectious at that time when viral load was undetectable).

**2** If the HCV antibody is positive at any point, follow-up HCV RNA testing is required. Persons with confirmed positive HCV RNA results should be referred for further evaluation and care.

**3** The PEpline recommends the initial HCV follow-up test at 6 weeks, which coincides with the first HIV follow-up test. There are no data that establish a clinical advantage to testing at 3 weeks vs. 6 weeks [Glynn, et al, Busch, et al, Hajarizadeh, et al]. HCV RNA becomes detectable beginning at 3 weeks. Testing earlier than 6 weeks can be performed at the discretion of the managing clinician, especially if preliminary assessment is needed. Positive HCV RNA indicates likely infection. However, approximately 25% of new infections will clear spontaneously [Naggie, et al]. Refer to an experienced provider for additional counseling, testing, and follow-up if positive.

**4** In HCV infection, HCV RNA can be transiently undetectable [Mosley, et al]. In addition, HCV antibodies develop slowly. Therefore, even though an early initial negative HCV RNA can be preliminarily reassuring, the PEpline recommends further HCV antibody testing at  $\geq 6$  months post-exposure to confirm transmission did not occur.

**5** An interval (i.e. 12-16 week) HCV antibody test may provide some reassurance for exposed persons in many instances (and align with HIV surveillance). However: (a) testing at this time point may not impact overall exposure management significantly, and (b) it is not sufficiently sensitive to completely exclude HCV transmission. Even at 15 weeks, only about 80% of HCV-infected persons will have positive HCV Ab [MMWR rr5005a1]. Therefore, the 6-month (24-week) HCV antibody test is considered to be conclusive in excluding HCV acquisition:  $\geq 97\%$  will be positive at 6 months post exposure [MMWR rr5005a1].

**6** Updated Information for Healthcare Personnel Potentially Exposed to Hepatitis C Virus (HCV): Recommended Testing and Follow-up (CDC). Nov 2016. Accessed at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/pdfs/testing-followup-exposed-hc-personnel-3d.pdf>.

**7** Updated U.S. Public Health Service Guidelines for the Management of Occupational Exposures to HBV, HCV, and HIV and Recommendations for Postexposure Prophylaxis. MMWR 2001; 50 (RR11): 1-42.

Note regarding exposed persons with symptoms: Symptoms of a viral illness compatible with acute HCV at any point up to 6 months post-exposure should prompt immediate evaluation.

Note regarding availability and feasibility of HCV RNA testing: HCV RNA testing might not be available or feasible at all institutions. If it is not possible to obtain the recommended HCV RNA testing, surveillance using antibody testing is essential in assessing HCV transmission.

Note regarding hepatic enzyme testing: The PEpline does not recommend routine liver enzyme testing for follow-up because of the possibility of abnormal results from causes other than HCV.

### References cited

Glynn SA, Wright DJ, Kleinman SH, et al. Dynamics of viremia in early hepatitis C virus infection. *Transfusion*. 2005 June; 45(6):994–1002. doi: 10.1111/j.1537-2995.2005.04390.x



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