

New York State Hepatitis C Testing Requirements

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease. It can cause severe liver damage, liver cancer, and even death if left untreated. However, people with hepatitis C can be successfully treated and cured with medications.

Hepatitis C is spread mainly by contact with the blood of people who have hepatitis C. This can happen by sharing equipment for injecting drugs, or for tattoos or body piercing. Hepatitis C can also be passed from a pregnant person to their baby during pregnancy.

What are New York State requirements for hepatitis C testing?

New York State requires a hepatitis C screening test be provided to:

- Everyone 18 years or older.
- People with a risk who are younger than 18 years.
- Every pregnant person during each pregnancy.

If a person accepts the offer of a hepatitis C screening test, and the result is reactive, or positive, the health care provider must make sure a hepatitis C RNA test is done to diagnose hepatitis C infection.

If the person tested is diagnosed with hepatitis C, the health care provider must either offer the person follow-up hepatitis C health care and treatment, or they must refer the person to a health care provider who can.

Why should all adults and pregnant people get tested for hepatitis C?

- New cases of hepatitis C are on the rise, particularly among younger adults and pregnant people.
- Most people with hepatitis C have no symptoms and they do not feel sick.
- Almost half of people with hepatitis C are unaware of their infection.
- Testing is the first step to getting treated and cured for hepatitis C.

When should someone younger than 18 years of age be tested for hepatitis C?

People younger than 18 years should be tested for hepatitis C if they:

- Have ever shared needles, syringes, or any other equipment for preparing and injecting drugs.
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail.
- Snorted drugs.
- Have HIV.
- Were exposed to hepatitis C at birth.
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick, or through injury with a sharp object.

How is hepatitis C testing done?

Hepatitis C testing is a two-step process. A health care provider may run both tests in one blood draw.

The first step is a hepatitis C screening test that looks for antibodies to the virus in the blood. This test can be done by collecting a blood sample that is sent to a lab, or by a fingerstick using a hepatitis C rapid antibody test.

- A non-reactive, or negative, antibody test means that a person does not have hepatitis C. However, if a person has been recently exposed to the hepatitis C virus, they will need to be tested again.
- A reactive, or positive, antibody test means that hepatitis C antibodies were found in the blood. The person may have hepatitis C. A person who has had hepatitis C will always have antibodies in their blood, even if they were treated and cured. A follow-up test, the hepatitis C RNA test, looks for virus in the blood to diagnose if a person currently has hepatitis C.

For more information on hepatitis C testing, go to: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1921.pdf>.

What is the treatment for hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C can be cured with medications that are easy to take. All hepatitis C treatments are pills taken by the mouth for 8 to 12 weeks. Sometimes treatment is only one pill, once a day. Most people have few side effects.

For more information on hepatitis C treatment, go to: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1923.pdf>.

Where can someone find free hepatitis C testing in New York State?

For testing locations in New York State go to:

https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/hepatitis/hepatitis_c/providers/testing_locations.htm.

Where can someone find a health care provider for hepatitis C treatment in New York State?

The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute's online directory provides easy access and information regarding all participating hepatitis C providers across New York State. To find a hepatitis C provider, go to: <https://providerdirectory.aidsinstituteny.org>.

For more information, go to: www.health.ny.gov/hepatitisc