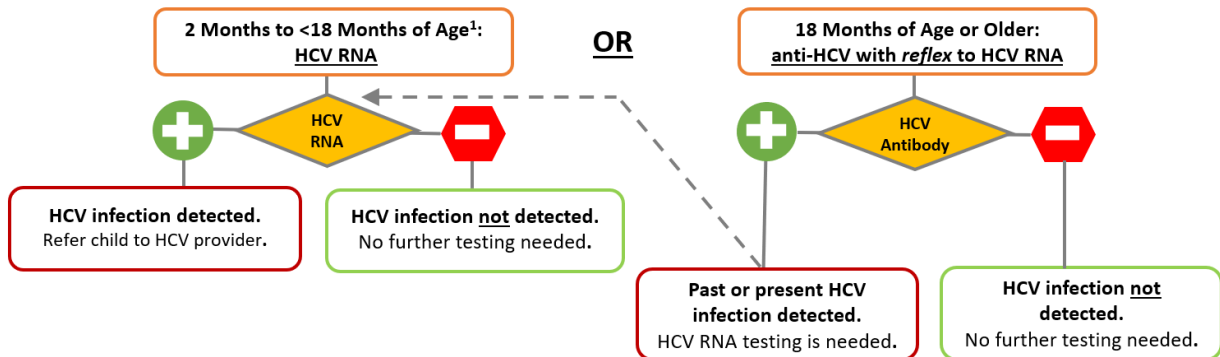


A Pediatric Guide: Caring for Infants Born to Hepatitis C-Infected Mothers

Infants exposed to hepatitis C virus (HCV) at birth are recommended to be tested for HCV to determine their HCV status. Perinatal HCV infections are reportable in Georgia (Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 31-12-2).

Testing Recommendations and Interpretations

AGE ¹	LABORATORY TEST
2 Months to <18 Months	Hepatitis C Virus RNA (HCV RNA)
≥18 Months	Hepatitis C virus antibody (anti-HCV) with reflex to HCV RNA



¹HCV RNA testing is not recommended prior to 2 months of age.

Common Questions about Perinatal Hepatitis C

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infectious liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV affects the liver and over many years can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and premature death in adults.

How is hepatitis C transmitted?

HCV is transmitted through contact with infected blood. HCV can be transmitted from an infected mother to her newborn at birth. There is no prophylaxis to prevent infection.

Is breastfeeding contraindicated for infants born to HCV-infected mothers?

No. HCV-infected women can breastfeed, except when the mother has cracked, damaged, or bleeding nipples, or is co-infected with HIV.

What is the risk of HCV-exposed infants developing infection?

HCV-exposed infants have a 6% risk of developing infection; the risk increases if the mother has inadequately controlled HIV and/or has higher HCV-RNA levels (i.e., greater 6 log₁₀ IU/mL).

Can an exposed child be tested for HCV antibody (anti-HCV) prior to 18 months of age?

No. Maternal HCV antibody is detectable in exposed infants up to 18 months of age. The HCV RNA test can be performed at 2-18 months of age.

What if my patient is infected with HCV?

Refer child to an HCV provider for further evaluation. Antivirals are approved for children ≥3 years of age.

Is HCV curable?

Yes. Cure has been reported as high as 98% of study subjects. Cure does not provide immunity to HCV and individuals can be re-exposed and reinfected.

Are any precautions needed for HCV-infected children?

HCV is not transmitted by casual contact. Children do not pose a risk to others and can participate in school, sports, and other activities without restrictions. Universal precautions should be followed to avoid blood exposure. Sharing personal items such as toothbrushes, razors, and nail clippers should be avoided.

How do I report HCV exposures and cases to Georgia Department of Public Health?

Report the HCV-positive result to the DPH within 7 days of diagnosis. Lab reports can be faxed to DPH at (404) 657-2608.

Additional guidelines by the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease can be accessed at: www.hcvguidelines.org/unique-populations/children.