

**SHOULD YOU BE TESTED FOR**

# **HEP** **?**

## **What is Hepatitis C?**

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. Hepatitis C can lead to serious liver damage. Hepatitis C progresses slowly and often has no symptoms. Many people have hepatitis C and don't know it. The only way to know if you have hepatitis C is to get tested.

## **Why Get Tested for Hepatitis C?**

There are things you can do to fight hepatitis C. Early detection can help. Knowing your hepatitis C status will help prevent transmission to others. Hepatitis C is a curable condition for most people. Today, hepatitis C treatment is effective, easy to take and has few side effects. Even if you do not start treatment, you can take steps to keep your liver healthy, such as avoiding alcohol and getting vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

## **Get Tested for Hepatitis C if You:**

- Are 18 years of age or older, at least once
- Are pregnant
- Injected drugs, even just once many years ago
- Received donated blood or organs before 1992
- Received clotting factor before 1987
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail
- Have HIV
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick or injury with a sharp object
- Were ever on long-term dialysis
- Snorted drugs

**For a list of free hepatitis C testing sites in New York State go to: [health.ny.gov/hepatitis](https://health.ny.gov/hepatitis)**

## Hepatitis C Antibody Test

A hepatitis C antibody test is a blood test that looks for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. The test can be done by collecting a blood sample and sending it to a lab, or by a fingerstick using a hepatitis C rapid antibody test. The hepatitis C antibody test will tell you if you have ever been exposed to hepatitis C. You may need a second test to know if you currently have hepatitis C.

## Hepatitis C Antibody Test Results

### If the test result is **NON-REACTIVE/NEGATIVE**

- A non-reactive or negative antibody test means that you do not currently have the hepatitis C virus.
- However, if you have engaged in risky behavior in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.
- Your non-reactive test result does not protect you from getting hepatitis C in the future.

### If the test result is **REACTIVE/POSITIVE**

- A reactive or positive antibody test means that you have antibodies to hepatitis C in your blood.
- You were exposed to hepatitis C at one time. You probably have the hepatitis C virus.
- You will need a second test to know for sure.

## Take the Second Test. Know for Sure.

- This second test is called an RNA test. Another name used for this test is a PCR test. The RNA test checks for hepatitis C virus in your blood.
- If the test comes back undetectable, you do not have the virus in your blood.
- If the test comes back detectable, then you have hepatitis C. All people with hepatitis C should access hepatitis C care and treatment.