

Should I Get Tested for Hepatitis C?

Who should be tested?

Hepatitis C testing is recommended for all adults age 18-79. Talk to your provider about additional risk factors that may require more regular screening.

Things to remember about getting tested for hepatitis C in the VA system:

- ▶ Testing is voluntary. It is a decision that you and your provider can make together.
- ▶ If you prefer to get tested outside the VA, check insurance coverage requirements.
- ▶ Refusing to take a test for hepatitis C will not prevent you from receiving other medical care at VA, but your health care provider may not have all the information necessary to take the best care of you.
- ▶ Your test results will be entered into your medical record.
- ▶ You won't lose your VA benefits just because you engage in certain drug use or sexual behaviors.

Benefits of HCV testing:

- ▶ VA has treatments for HCV that are very effective in curing the virus with few side effects.
- ▶ If you are infected with HCV, knowing allows you to avoid activities that could further damage your liver. Symptoms of HCV usually do not occur for 20-30 years after initial infection. Drinking alcohol while infected with HCV may speed up the destruction of the liver.
- ▶ If you are not infected with HCV, you may feel less anxious after testing and more committed to prevention.
- ▶ You can better protect people around you if you know you are infected with HCV.
- ▶ Early treatment of HCV will prevent progression of liver damage, making cirrhosis and liver cancer less likely.

Risks of HCV testing:

- ▶ You may experience sadness, depression, anxiety, or guilt if you are infected with HCV. Your VA health care provider is available to answer your questions and help you cope with these feelings. Fortunately, HCV can now be cured in most people, so talk to your provider about getting treatment right away.
- ▶ The results will be entered into your medical record, which is confidential but not anonymous. If you sign a release of information (ROI) form, individuals outside VA may see the test results.
- ▶ Positive results of HCV testing may be reported to a state health agency; however, your name will not be shared.

Where can I get more information?

Talk to your VA provider or visit www.hepatitis.va.gov.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health
Administration