



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Hepatitis C Testing in Pregnancy

Information Leaflet



Oxford University NHS Foundation Trust and Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust are offering opt out Hepatitis C testing to all pregnant women and birthing people at booking. The testing will take place at the same time as the other routine antenatal screening tests (Hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis). This is a project supporting the work towards the World Health Organisation target to eliminate Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) by 2030.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus that spreads through contact with infected blood. The most common routes of transmission are from medical and dental procedures in some resource poor settings, from tattooing, body piercing, when injecting drugs or from blood transfusions before 1996. Hepatitis C is a major global health problem affecting over 1% of the world's population.

Suggest: Around 1 in 200 people in the UK have Hepatitis C – this is higher in at risk groups. In some countries outside the UK, around 15 in 100 people have Hepatitis C infection.

Hepatitis C is known as a silent virus as it can go undiagnosed for years. It is important to screen (test) for Hepatitis C as people who are infected have a 3 in 10 chance of developing liver damage and between a 1 in 5 to 1 in 10 chance of developing liver cancer. Therefore, diagnosing this infection as early as possible means treatment can be offered and the Hepatitis C infection can be cured.

The chance of transmission of Hepatitis C from mother to child is low. It is thought to be about 6 in 100. The chance of transmission is higher if a mother or pregnant person is also infected with HIV. The treatment to cure a Hepatitis C infection is now available but cannot be given during pregnancy. Hepatitis C does not cause any pregnancy related problems.

What results can I expect?

A Negative Result

A negative result means that you do not have a Hepatitis C infection, but it does not mean you are protected from the chance of infection throughout your pregnancy. It is very important to protect yourself from infection by avoiding risky behaviours (such as drug use by injection). Tell your midwife or GP as soon as possible if you think you may be at risk of having contracted Hepatitis C. Your midwife can offer you another test later in pregnancy if you think you may be at risk of having contracted Hepatitis C.

A Positive Result

A positive result means that you have a Hepatitis C infection. You will be offered care by a specialist team, who will check your health before and after the birth of the baby. Your partner, any other children and close family members may also need to be tested and will be offered treatment if they have a positive result. Your midwife will tell you how your family can get screened (tested). If you are found to have Hepatitis C during pregnancy, you will be offered treatment after you have given birth. Treatment offers an excellent cure rate but it cannot be given during pregnancy.

During birth, the baby will come into contact with your blood, which will mean there is a chance that the Hepatitis C virus will be passed on to them. It is therefore very important that your baby is tested. We would recommend that this takes place at around 18 months of age.

There is no Hepatitis C vaccination for babies, but there is treatment available. If a child is found to have Hepatitis C following the screening, they will be referred for specialist care and treatment to cure the Hepatitis C infection.

When will I get my Hepatitis C result?

If your result is negative, your midwife will discuss it with all your other results. This will happen at or before your next antenatal appointment at about 16 weeks of pregnancy.

The result will also be recorded in your maternity record.

If your result is positive for Hepatitis C, a specialist midwife will contact you within 10 days of you having had the blood test. They will discuss the result with you and if you have an active infection, they will refer you to the Viral Hepatitis Team for further assessment and care.

Other helpful information and support is available at:

Hepatitis C Trust

(An organisation with Hepatitis C expertise)

Website: www.hepctrust.org.uk

Telephone: **020 7089 6221**

(staffed on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 10.30am to 4.30pm).

We would like to thank the Oxfordshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership for their contribution in the development of this leaflet.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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May 2024

Review: May 2027

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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