



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL

Governor

JAMES V. McDONALD, MD, MPH

Commissioner

JOHANNE E. MORNE, MS

Executive Deputy Commissioner

1/13/26

Dear Colleague,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a new hepatitis C virus (HCV) RNA testing program for HCV exposed infants. The testing is being offered by the Wadsworth Center to all New York State providers at no cost. Testing can be performed on small sample volumes (100-500µl), which is advantageous for pediatric populations.

Rates of hepatitis C infection among persons of reproductive age are increasing in the United States¹. Approximately 6% of pregnant individuals with active hepatitis C infection will transmit the infection to their infant². In 2023, CDC released guidelines recommending HCV RNA testing for all perinatally exposed infants when they are 2-6 months old or 7-17 months old, if not previously tested³. Prompt HCV diagnosis in perinatally exposed infants will lead to improved follow up care and treatment. Treatment is available for children with perinatally-acquired hepatitis C infection at >3 years of age³.

The Bloodborne Viruses Laboratory at the Wadsworth Center is offering free qualitative HCV RNA testing to infants born to pregnant individuals with active HCV infection (HCV RNA positive individuals). The laboratory has validated the Hologic Aptima HCV Quant Dx assay for use with smaller volumes (100-500µl) of plasma and serum and to allow for testing of whole blood, plasma and serum specimens received within 6-7 days of collection.

To utilize the Pediatric HCV RNA testing service, NYS providers should do the following:

- Call the NYS order desk at 518-474-4175 to request a HIV/HCV Pediatric Collection Kit.
- Order testing using the CLIMS application on the Health Commerce System. (<https://www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/electronic-test-request-reporting-new>) or PDF requisition form (<https://www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/dr>).
- Collect a single venous blood sample from the HCV-exposed infant when they are 2 to 6 months old (preferred) or 7-17 months old, if not previously tested.
- Package sample using materials provided in the kit and ship overnight to the laboratory via FedEx using the prepaid shipping label.

HCV RNA testing is performed once a week with most results returned within a week or less.

For more information, feel free to contact the laboratory (email: bbvlab@health.ny.gov or phone: 518-474-2163).

Sincerely,

Linda Styer, Ph.D.
Director, Bloodborne Viruses Laboratory
Wadsworth Center, New York State Department of Health

¹ Chen P, Johnson L, Limketkai BN, et al. Trends in the Prevalence of Hepatitis C Infection During Pregnancy and Maternal-Infant Outcomes in the US, 1998 to 2018. *JAMA Network Open*. 2023;6(7):e2324770. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.24770

² Hughes, BL. Etal. Hepatitis C in pregnancy: screening, treatment, and management. *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 2017, Volume 217, Issue 5, B2-B12

[https://www.ajog.org/article/S0002-9378\(17\)30930-4/fulltext](https://www.ajog.org/article/S0002-9378(17)30930-4/fulltext)

³ Panagiotakopoulos L, Sandul AL, et al. CDC Recommendations for Hepatitis C Testing Among Perinatally Exposed Infants and Children — United States, 2023. *MMWR Recomm Rep* 2023;72(No. RR-4):1–19. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr7204a1>