

## **COUNSELING MESSAGES:**

For clients whose test results are **non-reactive**, counselors will address HCV risk reduction and the need for repeat testing if the HCV exposure was recent (within the last 6 months). In providing rapid non-reactive results to a client, the following are important key messages.

### **Non-reactive result means:**

- The client is probably not infected with Hepatitis C.
- Non-reactive results do not protect a client from getting HCV in the future.
- If client engaged in risky behavior within the last 6 months, he/she should get retested (shared injection equipment, had rough, unprotected sex, etc.).

### **Be safe, don't get HCV:**

Provide accurate information on steps necessary to prevent infection including the following:

- Don't share needles, or any other injection equipment (cotton, cooker, water, etc.)
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers or anything that may have blood on them.
- Don't get a tattoo, piercing or body art on the street, jail or someone's home. Instead, get them from a licensed artist.
- Don't engage in rough unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- HCV **IS NOT** transmitted by casual contact like sneezing, hugging, or sharing eating or drinking utensils.

### **Make healthy choices, protect your liver:**

- Provide client with basic liver and hepatitis education.
- Encourage healthy eating, exercise, and getting enough rest.
- Emphasize importance of hepatitis A and B vaccinations. Make referral or start series immediately if possible.
- Practice safer sex by getting tested and treated for any STIs and HIV, and using condoms or other barriers (dental dams, gloves).

### **See a provider, stay in care:**

- Even if the individual doesn't have hepatitis C, they should see a doctor on a regular basis.
- Assess the need for and provide, or make referrals for, other prevention services if necessary.

### **Remind client to "Stay Negative":**

- Provide educational materials and assess the need for other referrals or prevention services.
- Remind and review with client ways to "**Stay Negative**".

Testing for hepatitis C is a two-step process. All clients with a reactive rapid antibody test must be referred for or offered a diagnostic test- HCV RNA. When providing reactive antibody test results to a client, the following are important key messages.

**Reactive result means:**

- The client has antibodies to Hepatitis C, which means they were exposed to hepatitis C at one time. The antibody test cannot tell if a client is infected now.
- A second test- a diagnostic test that looks for HCV RNA- is necessary to determine if the client is currently infected.

**Next Steps:**

- Refer the client to [insert agency's name or referral agency](#) for HCV diagnostic testing (HCV RNA) and [insert agency's name or referral agency](#) for HCV medical evaluation if necessary.

**Be safe, don't spread HCV:**

Provide accurate information on steps necessary to prevent transmission, including the following:

- Don't share needles, or any other injection equipment (cotton, cooker, water, etc.).
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers or anything that may have blood on them.
- Don't get a tattoo, piercing or body art on the street, jail or someone's home. Instead, get them from a licensed artist.
- Don't engage in rough unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- HCV **IS NOT** transmitted by casual contact like sneezing, hugging, or sharing eating or drinking utensils.

**Make healthy choices, protect your liver:**

- Provide client with basic liver and hepatitis education.
- Encourage healthy eating, exercise, getting enough rest, and avoiding alcohol.
- Emphasize importance of hepatitis A and B vaccinations. Make referral or start series immediately if possible.
- Practice safer sex by getting tested and treated for any STIs and HIV, and using condoms or other barriers (dental dams, gloves).

**See a provider and learn about HCV treatment options:**

- Confirm with the client an appointment for or plans to get a diagnostic test.
- Explain that hepatitis C can be cured.
- Reassure client that HCV treatment options have changed. Treatments are shorter, more successful, and have fewer side effects.
- While not everyone needs hepatitis C treatment, clients should have the opportunity to discuss options with a provider.

**Importance of follow-up:**

- Provide educational materials and assess the need for other referrals or prevention services.
- Repeat importance of attending referral appointment for diagnostic testing and medical evaluation, provide reminder card with referral information.