

New York State Requirements for Universal Hepatitis C Testing

Why does New York State require universal hepatitis C testing?

- New cases of hepatitis C are on the rise, particularly among reproductive age adults. Most new infections occur among adults 20-39 years of age. Hepatitis C among pregnant people has increased over the last decade.
- Most people with hepatitis C have no symptoms. Almost half of people with hepatitis C are unaware of their infection. If left untreated, hepatitis C can lead to serious liver disease.
- Hepatitis C is curable. More than 90 percent of people with hepatitis C can be treated and cured with 8–12 weeks of oral therapy.
- Testing is the first step to getting curative treatment and eliminating hepatitis C in New York State.

What are New York State requirements for universal hepatitis C testing?

Effective May 3, 2024, New York State requires a hepatitis C screening test be provided to:

- Every person 18 years and older.
- People younger than 18 if there is indication of risk.
- All pregnant people during each pregnancy. Screening test results must be recorded in the pregnant person's medical record at or before the time of hospital admission for delivery.

If the screening test is reactive, a hepatitis C RNA test must be performed on the same specimen or a second specimen collected at the same time as the initial test, to confirm diagnosis of current hepatitis C infection.

If the hepatitis C RNA test is detectable, the health care provider must either offer the person follow-up hepatitis C health care and treatment, or refer the person to a health care provider who can.

When should someone younger than 18 be tested for hepatitis C?

New York State requires people under age 18 be provided a hepatitis C screening test if they have a risk. For example, if they:

- Have ever shared needles, syringes, or any other equipment for preparing and injecting drugs.
- Got a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed artist, such as on the street or while in jail.
- Snorted drugs.
- Have HIV.
- Were exposed to hepatitis C at birth.
- Were exposed to blood on the job through a needlestick, or through injury with a sharp object.

Are there exceptions to the New York State requirement for universal hepatitis C testing?

Clinicians are not required to provide universal hepatitis C testing if they reasonably believes that:

- the individual is being treated for a life-threatening emergency; or
- the individual has previously been offered or has been the subject of a hepatitis C screening test (except that a test shall be offered if otherwise indicated); or
- the individual lacks capacity to consent to a hepatitis C screening test.

Which clinicians are required to provide universal hepatitis C testing?

Providers who must offer hepatitis C testing include physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, or midwives providing primary care regardless of setting, and without regard to board certification.

The medical settings where providers are required to offer a hepatitis C screening test are:

- Hospitals (inpatient).
- Hospital outpatient clinics.
- Emergency departments.
- Other health care settings where primary care services are being offered.

Is the hepatitis C screening test covered by Medicaid, Medicare, or other insurances?

- Medicaid and Medicare currently cover hepatitis C screening for all adults and people at risk.
- People with private insurance should refer to their policy, or contact their carrier to see if the test is covered.

What is the testing algorithm for hepatitis C?

Current testing guidance recommends a two-step testing sequence for diagnosis of hepatitis C infection. Testing is initiated with a hepatitis C antibody test. When this test is reactive, a hepatitis C RNA test is performed to confirm diagnosis of current infection. CDC recommends single-visit sample collection and use of reflex testing to support complete testing for hepatitis C.¹

What are the proper billing codes for hepatitis C testing?

New York State Medicaid reimburses laboratories for reflex testing for confirmation of hepatitis C antibody screening tests without additional written orders from the physician. The preprinted requisition form must indicate that the test will be used in the reflex algorithm. Visit: https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/update/2015/august15_mu.pdf.

Test Type	CPT Code
Hepatitis C antibody test	86803
Hepatitis C RNA Qualitative	87521
Hepatitis C RNA Quantitative	87522

What are providers required to report to their local health department?

- Health care providers, health care facilities, laboratories, and local and State health departments all share the responsibility for reporting, follow-up, and control of communicable diseases.
- Reporting of suspected, or confirmed, hepatitis C is mandated under the New York State Sanitary Code (10NYCRR 2.10). This includes patients with a positive hepatitis C screening test and/or a positive hepatitis C RNA test.
- Reports should be made to the local health department in the county in which the patient resides, and they need to be submitted within 24 hours of diagnosis. Information on how to report is available at: <https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/diseases/reporting/communicable/>.
- Providers may be contacted by local health departments for additional information and should provide requested information promptly.

Where can providers refer patient for hepatitis C care and treatment?

The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute's online directory provides information regarding participating hepatitis C providers across New York State. To find a hepatitis C provider, go to: <https://providerdirectory.aidsinstituteny.org>.

Where can providers learn more about providing hepatitis C treatment for their patients?

The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute Clinical Education Initiative (CEI) offers training, intensive preceptorship programs, tele-education, technical assistance, and additional clinical tools to enhance provider capacity to deliver hepatitis C services. Visit: <https://ceitraining.org/>.

Where can providers find out more about information about New York State requirements for universal hepatitis C testing?

Providers can find more information about the New York State requirements for universal hepatitis C testing by going to: www.health.ny.gov/hepatitisc. For further questions, contact: hepatabc@health.ny.gov

¹ Cartwright EJ, Patel P, Kamili S, Wester C. Updated Operational Guidance for Implementing CDC's Recommendations on Testing for Hepatitis C Virus Infection. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2023;72:766–768. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7228a2>