A Diagnostic Algorithm for Hepatitis C (HCV)

**Low-Risk Patients**
- Blood donor
- Test at patient request

- **EIA**: enzyme immunoassay, enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)
- **Immunoblot assay**: such as RIBA, SIA, etc.
- **HCV RNA**: assay of RNA by tests such as RT-PCR, bDNA, etc.
- **POS**: positive or elevated
- **NEG**: not elevated
- **IND**: indeterminate

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- **False positive EIA**
  - Counseling as required

- **Repeat in 6 months**

**High-Risk Patients**

- Any or all:
  - History of receipt of blood or blood products before June 1992
  - Injection drug use, ever
  - Multiple sexual partners or known HCV-positive sex partner
  - Other identified risk factors
  - Clinical or laboratory evidence of liver disease

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- **Recent risk exposure, acute hepatitis, immuno-compromised**
  - Counseling as required

- **Evaluate for other causes of liver disease, if evidence present**
  - **Evaluation/referral for treatment**
  - **HCV genotyping or serotyping**
  - **Quantitative HCV RNA**
  - **Counseling as required**

**Key**

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**Is HCV screening indicated for a patient?**
- Obtain risk history to determine likelihood of past exposure to HCV

**What makes a patient high-risk?**
Any or all:
- Receipt of blood or blood products before June 1992
- Injection drug use, even once
- Multiple sexual partners or known HCV+ sex partner
- Other identified risk factors
- Clinical or laboratory evidence of liver disease

**Tell patients with risk history who are not HCV infected:**
- Hepatitis C infection can be prevented
- Avoid sharing injection equipment if using drugs; refer to drug treatment and needle exchange program
- When having sex, use a latex condom for anal and vaginal sex with a person who is HCV infected or whose HCV status you do not know (consistent and correct use of condoms prevents the transmission of other diseases as well)
- Casual contact (e.g., kissing, shaking hands, sneezing, hugging, sharing food) does not put them at risk

**Tell patients who are HCV infected:**
- Consider referral to specialist for treatment evaluation
- If HIV-infected, inform the health care provider treating them for HIV
- If pregnant, inform the prenatal care provider
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Consult health care provider before using any medications (including over-the-counter)
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, unless already immune
- Avoid sharing syringes, cookers, other injection equipment, or straws if using drugs; refer to drug treatment and needle exchange program
- Do not share household items (such as toothbrushes, razors, needles, or nail clippers) that can be contaminated with blood or other body fluids
- Practice safer sex (e.g., use a latex condom for anal and vaginal sex)
- Do not donate body organs or blood, semen, or other body fluids
- Talk to anyone they may have exposed to HCV and encourage them to get screened

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Hepatitis C is reportable to your local Board of Health or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health

MDPH Confidential Fax: 617-983-6813