**Initial Hepatitis C Testing and Evaluation**

**Who Should Be Tested for Hepatitis C?**

**New: Anyone born between 1945 and 1965 should be tested once, regardless of risk factors**

In addition, patients with the following risk factors:
- Elevated ALT (even intermittently)
- A history of illicit injection drug use or intranasal cocaine use (even once)
- Needle stick or mucosal exposure to blood
- Current sexual partners of HCV infected persons
- Received blood/organs before 1992
- Received clotting factors made before 1987
- Chronic hemodialysis
- Infection with HIV
- Children born to HCV-infected mothers

**Why Test People Born Between 1945-1965?**
- 76% of the ~4 million people with HCV infection in the US are baby boomers
- In the 1945-1965 cohort:
  - All: 1 out of 30
  - Men: 1 out of 23
  - African American men: 1 out of 12
- Up to 75% do not know they have HCV
- 73% of HCV-related deaths are in baby boomers

**What Can Happen to People with Hepatitis C?**
- It is important to identify if patients have cirrhosis
- Patients with cirrhosis are at risk for liver cancer (HCC) and liver decompensation (ascites, variceal bleed, hepatic encephalopathy, jaundice)
- Hepatitis C is curable, and cure reduces the risk of severe complications, even with cirrhosis
- Refer patients to a specialist who has experience treating hepatitis C to see if they need treatment

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**Counsel Patients with HCV Infection About Reducing Risk of Transmission**
- Do not donate blood, body organs, other tissue, or semen
- Do not share personal items that might have small amounts of blood (toothbrushes, razors, nail-grooming equipment, needles) and cover cuts and wounds
- HCV is not spread by hugging, kissing, food or water, sharing utensils, or casual contact
- If in short term or multiple relationships, use latex condoms. No condom use is recommended for long-term monogamous couples (risk of transmission is very low)

**Initial Management**
- Evaluate alcohol use (CAGE, AUDIT-C) and recommend stopping use
- Vaccinate for hepatitis A and hepatitis B if not previously exposed
- Evaluate sources of support (social, emotional, financial) needed for HCV treatment


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**Hepatitis C Antibody (HCV Ab)**

Positive (+) → Check HCV RNA (viral load)

Positive (+) → Hepatitis C infection → Evaluation and referral

Negative (-) STOP here if no concern for acute infection or severe immunosuppression. If so, check HCV RNA.

These people are NOT chronically infected.
- Detectable HCV Ab with negative HCV RNA can occur with spontaneous clearance of infection (about 25% of people exposed to HCV will clear; verify HCV RNA negative in 4 to 6 months) or with treatment of HCV.

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1Example ICD-9 codes for HCV antibody testing:
- V73.89: screening for other specified viral disease
- 790.4: nonspecific elevation of levels of transaminase; use if patient ever had an elevated ALT

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- Example ICD-9 codes for HCV antibody testing: