

# The Case for Universal HCV Screening in Pregnant Women

**Leading hepatitis advocates are calling for expanded hepatitis C virus (HCV) screening during pregnancy**

Historically, HCV testing has only been recommended for women with reported risk factors for HCV. Recent increases in HCV among pregnant women and women of childbearing age, as well as concerns about HCV among infants born to HCV-positive mothers, suggest the need to change screening practices.

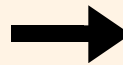


**Proposed changes in HCV screening during pregnancy:**

## Risk-based screening

**Test only pregnant women who report risk factors\* for HCV infection**

\* such as history of injection or intranasal drug use, blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to the availability of HCV testing, hemodialysis patients, HIV infection



## Universal screening

**Test ALL pregnant women for HCV regardless of risk factors**



## WHY NOW?



**HCV is increasing among young Americans,<sup>1</sup> including women of child-bearing age**

- 400% rise among ages 18-29
- 325% rise among ages 30-39

**HCV in pregnant women at the time of delivery increased**

**89%**

**between 2009 and 2014<sup>2</sup>**

**An estimated 1,700 babies born to HCV-positive mothers are infected each year in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>**

**Of these, roughly 85% remain undiagnosed due to inadequate testing among exposed infants.<sup>4</sup>**

While HCV testing and treatment **prior to** pregnancy is recommended to help eliminate the risk of vertical HCV transmission, universal screening **during pregnancy** would identify HCV infection among women who were not previously tested.

# Universal HCV Screening in Pregnant Women

## WHY CHANGE THE RECOMMENDATIONS?

### RISK-BASED SCREENING DOES NOT CAPTURE ALL HCV CASES

A recent study<sup>5</sup> in a large hospital system showed that:

- 64% of pregnant women with a risk factor for HCV were not tested
- 10% of pregnant women who tested HCV-positive had no reported risk factors

### UNIVERSAL SCREENING CAN IDENTIFY HCV IN WOMEN UNAWARE OF THEIR INFECTION



Women diagnosed during pregnancy can be linked to:

- harm reduction and other services during pregnancy
- HCV treatment after delivery

UNIVERSAL SCREENING HELPS ENSURE THAT BABIES BORN TO HCV-INFECTED MOTHERS RECEIVE APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP CARE



## MOVING TOWARD CHANGE

Universal HCV screening during pregnancy is now recommended by the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Disease Society of America.<sup>6</sup>

In April 2018, Kentucky became the first state to require HCV testing for all pregnant women during prenatal care. Lawmakers passed Senate Bill 250 in response to statewide increases in HCV largely attributed to the opioid epidemic.<sup>7</sup>

### NEXT STEPS

Other public health agencies including the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are reviewing their HCV recommendations in consideration of universal screening for pregnant women.

For more information about how you can show support for universal HCV screening for pregnant women, contact us at [info@nvhr.org](mailto:info@nvhr.org).



1. [www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/2017/hepatitis-c-and-opioid-injection-press-release.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/2017/hepatitis-c-and-opioid-injection-press-release.html)

2. Patrick SW et al. (2017). MMWR, 66(18):470-473.

3. Ly KN et al. (2017). Ann Intern Med, 166(11): 775-82.

4. Kuncio DE et al. (2016). Clin Infect Dis, 62(8): 980-985.

5. Boudova S et al. (2018). Open Forum Infect Dis, 5(3).

6. [www.hcvguidelines.org/unique-populations/pregnancy](http://www.hcvguidelines.org/unique-populations/pregnancy)

7. [www.lrc.ky.gov/record/18RS/sb250.htm](http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/18RS/sb250.htm)