



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Update

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this update may be directed to the office of:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Clark County Public Health
Cowlitz County Health Department
Skamania County Health Department
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services
(360) 397-8412

Please Distribute

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

HEALTH UPDATE

January 7, 2013

TO: Physicians and other Healthcare Providers

FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer

RE: Updated CDC recommendations for screening patients for Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection

The CDC recently updated its recommendations for screening patients for Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. The CDC is now recommending one-time HCV testing **for all persons born during 1945–1965**. These recommendations do not replace previous guidelines for HCV testing based on known risk factors and clinical indications. Rather, they define an additional target population for testing: persons born during 1945–1965.

The following summarizes the recommendations:

Recommendations for the Identification of Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Infection Among Persons Born during 1945–1965*

- Adults born during 1945–1965 should receive one-time testing for HCV without prior ascertainment of HCV risk.
- All persons with identified HCV infection should receive a brief alcohol screening and intervention as clinically indicated, followed by referral to appropriate care and treatment services for HCV infection and related conditions.

Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment of Opportunistic Infections in HIV-Infected Adults and Adolescents†

- HIV-infected patients should be tested routinely for evidence of chronic HCV infection. Initial testing for HCV should be performed using the most sensitive immunoassays licensed for detection of antibody to HCV (anti-HCV) in blood.

Recommendations for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Infection and HCV-Related Chronic Diseases§

Routine HCV testing is recommended for

- Persons who ever injected illegal drugs, including those who injected once or a few times many years ago and do not consider themselves as drug users.
- Persons with selected medical conditions, including
 - persons who received clotting factor concentrates produced before 1987;
 - persons who were ever on chronic (long-term) hemodialysis; and
 - persons with persistently abnormal alanine aminotransferase levels.
- Prior recipients of transfusions or organ transplants, including
 - persons who were notified that they received blood from a donor who later tested positive for HCV infection;
 - persons who received a transfusion of blood or blood components before July 1992; and
 - persons who received an organ transplant before July 1992.

Routine HCV testing is recommended for persons with recognized exposures, including

- Health care, emergency medical, and public safety workers after needle sticks, sharps, or mucosal exposures to HCV-positive blood.
- Children born to HCV-positive women.

* Source: CDC. Recommendations for the identification of chronic hepatitis C virus infection among persons born during 1945–1965. MMWR 2012;61(No. RR-4).

† Source: CDC. Guidelines for prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections in HIV-infected adults and adolescents: Recommendations from CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and the HIV Medicine Association of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. MMWR 2009;58(No. RR-4).

§ Source: CDC. Recommendations for prevention and control of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection and HCV-related chronic disease. MMWR 1998;47(No. RR-19).

There are several reasons for this update:

1. HCV infection is an increasing cause of morbidity and mortality in our community and throughout the United States.
2. Many of the 2.7 – 3.9 million people living with HCV infection are unaware of their infection and consequently do not receive the appropriate education, counseling, monitoring and treatment
3. The CDC estimates that although persons born between 1945 and 1965 represent 27% of the US population, they account for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of all HCV infections in the United States and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of all HCV-associated mortality. In addition, this cohort is at greatest risk for developing hepatocellular carcinoma and other HCV-related liver disease.
4. Therapies are now available to halt disease progression and provide a virologic cure, defined as sustained viral clearance following treatment completion.

Healthcare providers and patients can discuss HCV testing as part of an individual's preventive health care. Persons identified with HCV infection should receive a brief screening for alcohol use and intervention as clinically indicated, including hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination (as appropriate) and medical monitoring, followed by referral to appropriate care for HCV infection and related conditions (Strong Recommendation, Moderate Quality of Evidence). Recommendations are available to guide treatment decisions:

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3229841/pdf/hep0054-1433.pdf>). Treatment decisions should be made by the patient and their healthcare provider after several factors are considered, including stage of disease, hepatitis C genotype, co-morbidities, therapy-related adverse events, and benefits of treatment.

If you have questions, please call:

- Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182
- Cowlitz County Health and Human Services: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207

Thank you for your partnership.