

Hepatitis C Virus Pre- and Post-Test Checklists

Confidential hepatitis C Virus (HCV) pre- and post-test discussions can significantly affect how the client responds to testing and test results. When **using simple language** and individualized to a client's needs, these discussions: provide important preventive and health promotion information, enable better disease management, and encourage continued engagement with health and social care.

HCV Antibody Pre-test Discussion Checklist

- Discuss the reasons for the HCV test (client or provider initiated), such as modes of transmission.
- Provide information about the testing process, including:
 - An explanation of the HCV antibody test, including window period and the need for HCV RNA test (HCV-PCR) if the antibody test is positive.
 - The time it takes for results to become available.
- Explain that Public Health receives positive test results and may contact client.
- Discuss impact of possible positive result for client and others, including transmission prevention, and confidentiality and disclosure issues.
- Waiting for test results can be challenging. Discuss supports the client might need to access during the waiting period.
- Discuss a follow-up plan to obtain results and vaccines available for those at-risk/infected.
- Check the client's understanding of the information provided.
- Confirm if the client is now ready to proceed with testing.

HCV Antibody Post-test Discussion Checklists

Negative

HCV Antibody Test

Positive

- Explain the meaning of a negative test result and confirm client understanding.
- Discuss indications for further testing, considering window periods, ongoing risk behaviours, or being immune compromised. Make a follow-up plan, if applicable.
- For those at-risk, explore resources needed such as education, harm reduction, vaccines, social and other resources, as appropriate.
- Make referrals and encourage engagement with health care and other support services, as needed.
- Explain the meaning of a positive test result (i.e., the client has been exposed to hepatitis C).

Receiving a diagnosis of HCV is complex and can be life changing. It is important to convey the test results and relevant information in a positive and culturally safe way that encourages engagement and facilitates follow-up planning with the client.

- Provide time for the client to process the result and confirm client's understanding.
- Explain the need for an HCV RNA test to determine if the viral infection is still active.
- Discuss potential for stigma and that **disclosure is voluntary**.
- Discuss modes of transmission, harm reduction, vaccines, social and other resources, as appropriate.
- Make a follow-up plan, make referrals, and encourage engagement with other health care and support services, as needed.



HCV RNA Post-Test Discussion Checklists



HCV RNA Test

Negative

- Explain the meaning of a negative test (i.e., the client has cleared the virus and is no longer infected).
- Explain the need for a repeat test to rule out a false negative test result.
- Discuss risks for re-infection.
- Discuss any difficulties/issues the client may have in practicing safer behaviours, if appropriate.
- Explore resources needed such as education, harm reduction, vaccines, or others.
- Make referrals and encourage engagement with health care and other support services, as needed.
- Check the client's understanding of the information provided.

Positive

- Explain the meaning of a positive test (active HCV infection).
- Explain the need for a repeat RNA test to rule out a false positive result.
- If you suspect a newly acquired infection, discuss the need for another HCV RNA test in about six months to check if the infection is ongoing.
- Provide time for the client to process the result and confirm that they understand the result.
- Discuss modes of transmission, transmission prevention, lack of immunity against other HCV genotypes, and notifying contacts at-risk.
- Explain that HCV is a chronic disease that progresses slowly and treatments are available.
- Explain the impact of alcohol and other substances on the progression of liver disease.
- Discuss the potential for stigma and that **disclosure is voluntary**.
- Discuss healthy lifestyles (diet, exercise) and harm reduction (e.g., safer behaviours and any difficulties that the person may have in practicing safer behaviours).
- Explore resources needed, such as HCV education or harm reduction resources.
- Determine the need for vaccines (e.g., hepatitis A and B, pneumococcal, and influenza).
- Discuss the need for regular monitoring to check for liver disease progression and for self-management support.
- Make a follow-up plan and make referrals to other health care and support services, as appropriate.
- Ask the client about other supports, such as family, friends, community, traditional and spiritual (e.g., spiritual leaders, sweats, ceremonies).

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This resource was adapted from a resource created by the Attendance for Hepatitis C Care Project. It would not have been possible without the valuable contributions from individuals affected by hepatitis C, service providers and representatives from First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations across Canada.

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