Hepatitis C, Chronic

Merlin disease code=07054
Case report form (CRF): Viral Hepatitis CRF
NO CRF REQUIRED

Background
Persons with chronic hepatitis C may have no evidence of liver disease or may have a spectrum of disease ranging from chronic hepatitis to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Most persons with chronic infection are asymptomatic.

Nucleic acid tests for HCV RNA (HCV NAT) include quantitative, qualitative, or genotype testing. No HCV antigen tests are currently approved by FDA. These tests will be acceptable laboratory criteria if and when an FDA-approved test becomes available.

Clinical criteria for case classification
Hepatitis C, chronic cases (Merlin disease code=07054) that meet the following criteria will be reclassified as hepatitis C, acute (Merlin disease code=07051) for investigation (if the person is determined to be asymptomatic or symptoms cannot be determined, the case will flip back to hepatitis c, chronic):

- Bilirubin $\geq$ 3.0 mg/dL,
- Or ALT $>$ 1000 IU/L),
- Or a person <18 years old.

Laboratory criteria for case classification
Confirmatory:
Either of the following:
- Positive HCV NAT
- Or positive HCV antigen.

Presumptive:
Both of the following:
- Positive HCV antibody (anti-HCV)
- And absence of a negative HCV NAT.

Epidemiological criteria for case classification
Confirmatory:
A person who does not meet the case definition for acute hepatitis C and meets one of the following:

- A child $\leq$ 3 years old known to be exposed to HCV via a mechanism other than perinatal transmission (e.g., acquired via health care exposure or household contact),
- Or a person $>$ 3 years old with no previous diagnosis or Merlin case of chronic hepatitis C,
- Or a person $>$ 3 years with both of the following:
  - A previous case of chronic hepatitis C with a positive HCV NAT result
  - Followed by 2 negative HCV NAT results $\geq$ 30 days apart, $\geq$ 30 days after the last positive HCV NAT.
Case classification

**Confirmed:**
A person ≥1 year old with confirmatory laboratory evidence and epidemiological criteria.

**Probable:**
A person ≥1 year old with presumptive laboratory evidence and epidemiological criteria.

**Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports**

*See epidemiological criteria for classification.* If positive results are received for specimens collected more than 365 days after an acute hepatitis C case occurred, a new chronic hepatitis C case should be created. If a person has a previous chronic hepatitis C diagnosis or Merlin case, a new chronic hepatitis C case should **not** be created.

**Reinfection**

For individuals with a previous acute or chronic hepatitis C with a positive HCV NAT result, a new confirmed chronic case may be created for persons >3 years old when there are two negative HCV NAT results followed by a new positive HCV NAT result, each of which are ≥30 days apart.

**Comments**

Children ≤3 years old should only be reported as perinatal hepatitis C (Merlin disease code=07058), not acute hepatitis C (Merlin disease code=07051) or chronic hepatitis C (Merlin disease code=07054) **unless** there is evidence that the case was exposed to HCV via a mechanism other than perinatal transmission (e.g., was acquired via health care exposure). Test results prior to 2 months of age should not be used for classification. Anti-HCV testing prior to 18 months of age should not be used for classification.

Report all available liver enzyme results for every case under liver function tests (Merlin disease code=00000).

See graphic for additional information related to the serological course of disease.

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