

Merlin disease code: 07054 Hepatitis C, Chronic

[Paper case report form](#)
Merlin extended data 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 until later in the disease process when significant damage has been done to the liver.

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

Reclassifying chronic hepatitis C as acute:

Cases with any of the following will be reclassified as acute hepatitis C, unless case reviewer verifies case has a more likely diagnosis for clinical criteria:

- One or more of the following symptoms: abdominal pain, anorexia (loss of appetite), clay colored stool, dark urine, jaundice, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, fever, headache, malaise, or myalgia (muscle pain);
- **Or** bilirubin ≥ 3.0 mg/dL;
- **Or** alanine aminotransferase (ALT) > 200 IU/L;
- **Or** a person < 18 years old, unless case reviewer verified that clinical criteria are not met.

Laboratory criteria for case classification

Confirmatory:

A person ≥ 1 year old with either of the following:

- Positive HCV NAT
- **Or** positive HCV antigen.

Presumptive:

A person ≥ 1 year old with both of the following:

- Positive HCV antibody (anti-HCV)
- **And** absence of a negative HCV NAT.

Reclassifying chronic hepatitis C as acute:

Cases with any of the following will be reclassified as acute hepatitis C:

- Negative anti-HCV and positive NAT with the same specimen event date (unless case reviewer verified that clinical criteria are not met),
- **Or** negative HCV NAT in the absence of a positive HCV NAT or anti-HCV with the same or earlier specimen event date followed within 365 days by positive HCV NAT,
- **Or** negative anti-HCV in the absence of a positive anti-HCV with the same or earlier specimen event date followed within 365 days by a positive HCV NAT or anti-HCV,
- **Or** negative HCV antigen in the absence of a positive HCV antigen or anti-HCV with the same or earlier specimen event date followed within 365 days by positive HCV antigen,

Hepatitis C, Chronic (Continued)

- **Or** a person >36 months old with a positive HCV NAT result followed by 2 negative HCV NAT results ≥ 30 days apart, ≥ 30 days after the last positive HCV NAT followed within 365 days by positive HCV NAT.

Epidemiological criteria for case classification

A person who does not meet the case definition for acute hepatitis C and meets one or more of the following:

- A child ≤ 36 months 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 child ≤ 36 months old with 2 positive HCV NAT results ≥ 180 days apart,
- **Or** a person >36 months old with no previous diagnosis or Merlin case of chronic hepatitis C,
- **Or** a person >36 months old with a previous case of chronic hepatitis C with a positive HCV NAT result followed by 2 negative HCV NAT results ≥ 30 days apart, ≥ 30 days after the last positive HCV NAT.

Case classification

Confirmed:

A person with confirmatory laboratory criteria and epidemiological criteria.

Probable:

A person with presumptive laboratory criteria 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 >36 months old when there are two negative HCV NAT results followed by a new positive HCV NAT result, each of which are ≥ 30 days apart. Reinfection cases should be investigated and interviewed.

Comments

Children ≤ 36 months 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) or the child has 2 positive HCV NAT results ≥ 180 days apart. Test results prior to 2 months of age should not be used for classification. Anti-HCV testing prior to 18 months of age

