

Merlin disease code: 07058 Hepatitis C, Perinatal

No paper case report form  
No Merlin extended data

## Background

Perinatal hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection in pediatric patients may range from asymptomatic to fulminant hepatitis.

## Clinical criteria for case classification

Not applicable.

## Laboratory criteria for case classification

### Confirmatory:

Either of the following:

- Positive nucleic acid test (NAT) for HCV RNA (including quantitative, qualitative, or genotype testing)
- **Or** positive HCV antigen test (if and when an FDA-approved test for HCV antigen is available).

### Supportive:

Both of the following:

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

## Epidemiological criteria for case classification

A child  $\leq 36$  months old not known to be exposed to HCV via a mechanism other than perinatal transmission (e.g., not acquired via health care exposure or household contact). This would include situations where the mother's HCV infection status is unknown (e.g., closed adoptions).

## Case classification

### Confirmed:

A child  $\geq 2$  months old and  $\leq 36$  months old with confirmatory laboratory criteria and epidemiologic criteria.

### Probable:

A child  $< 2$  months old with confirmatory laboratory criteria and epidemiologic criteria.

### Suspect:

A child  $\geq 2$  months old and  $\leq 36$  with supportive laboratory criteria and epidemiological criteria.

## Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports

Not applicable.

## Comments

There is no safe and effective intervention known to prevent vertical transmission of HCV from mother to fetus or baby during pregnancy or childbirth. Approximately 75% of children who are vertically infected with HCV will develop chronic hepatitis C and should be referred for further evaluation and follow-up. HCV vertical transmission is higher in those who are born to HIV-infected mothers.

**Follow-up testing should be prioritized for all suspect cases to identify true perinatal infections.** Antibody testing alone can reflect the mother's infection rather than true infection in an infant. Follow-up should include contacting the primary care giver and provider to ensure confirmatory testing is conducted.

Children  $\leq 36$  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). Test results prior to 2 months of age should not be used for classification.

Event date should be based on earliest relevant laboratory test date within the 2 to 36 month window.