Hep C Notes

How this liver disease is diagnosed

June 4, 2018 By Kate Ferguson

For those wondering whether they have hepatitis C virus (HCV), learning their status may require several steps. First, doctors use a simple test to detect the presence of HCV antibodies in the blood. A negative result means that an individual hasn't been exposed to hep C and further testing is generally unnecessary. But if antibodies are present, doctors usually order another test.

The additional exam is needed because despite a positive antibody test result, an individual may not have hepatitis C. A qualitative HCV RNA test helps docs make the final determination. A positive result on this second test confirms that the person has hepatitis C.

A negative result, however, establishes that the individual was exposed to the virus at some point but his or her body cleared the infection on its own.

For those with a positive HCV RNA test result, the next step is a quantitative HCV RNA test to measure the amount of virus in the blood.

Before treatment begins, another test is given to determine the strain, or genotype (1 through 6), of the virus so that doctors can prescribe the most effective of several medications available, which have viral cure rates of between 90 and 100 percent.

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