

One-time HCV testing for Baby Boomers

In August 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued final guidance recommending that all people born during 1945-1965 be tested for hepatitis C virus (HCV).

- An analysis of 1999-2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data found that 1 in 30 baby boomers—the generation born during 1945-1965—is infected with hepatitis C.¹
- Baby boomers account for approximately 75% of HCV prevalence in the US.¹
- Many were infected before there was any awareness of HCV or how it is transmitted. Furthermore, most are asymptomatic and often unaware of their infection until significant complications from chronic HCV arise.^{1,2}



With the availability of new HCV therapies and increased awareness of the need for screening, earlier diagnosis and targeted treatments are expected to reduce HCV progression and the development of HCV-related diseases.

CDC Recommendation

The CDC guidelines recommend an initial screen using an FDA-approved antibody test.¹ For any positive antibody result, the CDC recommends using an FDA-approved NAT—also called an HCV RNA test—to identify active HCV infection.¹

LabCorp offers test **144050—“Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Antibody With Reflex to Quantitative Real-time PCR”** using FDA-approved antibody and NAT tests to aid in the screening and follow up of those who are indicated for HCV evaluation, including baby boomers under this guidance. Any specimen found to be positive using the antibody test will automatically be tested using a quantitative HCV RNA test that will provide evidence of active HCV infection in addition to providing an accurate measurement of a patient’s viral load.³ HCV testing and HCV RNA testing may also be ordered separately.

Complications of HCV Infection

- Approximately 80% of patients with HCV are asymptomatic.² In the remaining 20% of patients who do experience symptoms, the symptoms may include poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, and fever.² These symptoms are not specific to HCV and thus provide no independent indication for HCV testing.²
- Despite delayed onset of symptoms in many patients, HCV persists as a chronic infection in approximately 75% to 85% of patients.^{4,5}
- It is estimated that up to 20% of HCV-infected persons will develop cirrhosis within the first 20 years of infection.^{4,5}
- Patients with HCV have an estimated 17-fold increased risk of developing liver cancer.⁵

HCV Background

- HCV is the most common bloodborne illness in the US, with an estimated 2.7 million to 3.9 million people living with the disease.^{4,5}
- Hepatitis C is spread through exposure to contaminated blood, often affecting people who are current or former injection drug users, and people who received blood transfusions or organ transplants prior to 1992 when widespread HCV screening of blood supply and organ donors began.^{1,4}
- HCV can also be transferred through sharing of contaminated personal items, such as a razor or toothbrush.^{1,4}