

Hepatitis C Screening for those born 1945-1965

The United States Center for Disease Control has recently (fall 2012) recommended that everyone born between 1945 and 1965 be screened by a blood test once for Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a viral liver infection acquired by contact through breaks in the skin or mucus membranes with blood or bodily fluids of an infected individual. Blood transfusions before regular donor testing for Hepatitis C, injectable drug abuse and sexual contact with an infected individual are examples of how it is spread. It is the most common cause of liver failure in the United States.

Around 80% of people who are infected with Hepatitis C continue to have live virus in their system the rest of their lives. Until recently, there was no treatment that could clear this virus, but newer treatments can accomplish this in a large number of cases.

If you test negative for Hepatitis C, nothing needs to be done and no further screening tests are needed. If you test positive, arrangements will be made for a consultation with a gastroenterologist (GI, specialist in digestive organs) or a liver specialist to determine if you are truly infected and discuss options for treatments or monitoring. One important point is that even moderate alcohol use in people infected with Hepatitis C increases the likelihood of developing serious liver disease.

At this point, some insurance companies cover the screening, but not all do. You would have to talk with your insurer if that would affect your decision.