

# Viral Hepatitis Testing - Quick Reference Guide for Physicians

## North Carolina Communicable Disease Branch



Communicable Disease Branch (Viral Hepatitis Surveillance)  
919-733-3419

Immunization Branch (Perinatal Hepatitis B)  
919-707-5575

	Hepatitis A (HAV)	Hepatitis B* (HBV)	Hepatitis C (HCV)
<b>TRANSMISSION ROUTE</b>	Fecal-oral	Primarily sexual, also parenteral, perinatal via blood/body fluids	Primarily parenteral; less commonly via sexual contact
<b>INCUBATION PERIOD</b>	15-50 days; average 28-30 days	14-180 days; average 60-90 days	14-180 days; average 6-9 weeks
<b>SYMPTOM ONSET</b>	Sudden; children less likely than adults to be symptomatic	Can be sudden or gradual; 50% of adults are asymptomatic	Usually gradual; 75% are asymptomatic
<b>SEVERITY</b>	Generally mild; 1/3 of cases require hospitalization; most have no lasting liver damage; rarely fatal; case fatality increases with advanced age	Most with acute infection recover with no lasting liver damage; rarely fatal. 15-25% with chronic infection develop chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, liver failure, liver cancer	Slowly progressive over 20-30 years; chronic infection can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer
<b>CHRONIC FORM?</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>TESTING TO DIAGNOSE ACUTE FORM</b>	Anti-HAV, IgM	HBsAg Anti-HBc, IgM	Anti-HCV HCV RNA (Lab tests can't differentiate between acute and chronic infection)
<b>TESTING TO DIAGNOSE CHRONIC FORM</b>	N/A	HBsAg HBV DNA HBeAg Anti-HBe	Anti-HCV HCV RNA HCV genotype (Lab tests can't differentiate between acute and chronic infection)
<b>TEST TO DETECT PREVIOUS INFECTION</b>	Anti-HAV, Total (Can't differentiate previous infection vs. vaccination)	Anti-HBc, Total Anti-HBs	Anti-HCV
<b>VACCINE?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>REPORT TO LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH **</b>	Yes, within 24 hours with positive anti-HAV, IgM	Acute cases – within 24 hours Chronic cases – within 7 days Report all HBsAg + pregnant women; Case management is provided by Public Health to ensure all infants receive appropriate treatment	Acute cases only – within 7 days

\*Additional Hepatitis B guidance can be found in the N.C. Hepatitis B Public Health Program Manual: <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/hepB/toc.html>

\*\*Case definitions and reporting criteria are available in the N.C. Communicable Disease Manual: <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/cd/toc.html>

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### ABBREVIATIONS

- **Anti-HAV** = Hepatitis A antibody
- **Anti-HAV, IgM** = IgM antibody to hepatitis A
- **Anti-HBs** = Hepatitis B surface antibody
- **Anti-HBe** = Hepatitis B e antibody
- **Anti-HBc** = Antibody to hepatitis B core antigen
- **HBsAg** = Hepatitis B surface antigen
- **HBeAg** = Hepatitis B e antigen
- **HBV DNA** = Hepatitis B virus
- **Anti-HBc, IgM** = IgM antibody to hepatitis B core antigen
- **Anti-HCV** = Hepatitis C antibody
- **HCV RNA** = Hepatitis C virus
- **HCV viral load** = Detection and/or count of the amount of Hepatitis virus in the blood
- **HCV genotype** = Determines type of hepatitis C viral "strain" (will be one of 6 types)