

Refer client to :

- Federally qualified health center (FQHC)
- Community-based organization

Talking with Clients About Living with Hepatitis C

An important purpose of this guide is to provide information about services available for people living with hepatitis C. If a client you tested has recently tested positive for HCV, it is important to let them know they are not alone. In the United States, there are more than 2.4 million adults living with hepatitis C; in 2021 there were 7,696 case of hepatitis C in Oklahoma.

- 1. Know your HCV status.** The only way to know for sure if you have hepatitis C is to get tested. In roughly 20% of HCV cases, a person's body is able to fight off the infection and clear the virus. An individual may test positive for antibodies but may not have a lifelong infection. In order to know if they have a lifelong (or chronic) infection, it is important to have a confirmatory test, such as an HCV RNA test. The CDC now recommends that people who test for HCV also complete an HCV RNA test right away, and that treatment should begin immediately in the event of a positive test. There is no need to wait to see if clearance will occur.
- 2. Get medical care.** Hepatitis C is known as a "silent epidemic" because people can live with the infection for many years without any noticeable symptoms. People with chronic hepatitis C should be monitored regularly for signs of liver disease; even though a person may not feel sick, damage to the liver can still occur. To evaluate the health of the liver, a provider may want to conduct an ultrasound or biopsy. People with HCV should receive medical care that includes:
 - An initial physical exam and medical history;
 - Liver function tests;
 - Viral load and genotype testing;
 - Vaccination for hepatitis A and B; and
 - Routine health maintenance and evaluation for other problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and other diseases.
- 3. Encourage them to talk with their provider about treatment.** Antiviral medication, such as direct-acting antiviral treatment, can be used to treat most people with hepatitis C. Type of treatment is a decision the client would make in consultation with their medical provider. They may need further evaluation before treatment begins, and medical care for possible liver disease in addition to ongoing medical monitoring.