

Perinatal Hepatitis C Testing and Treatment

Guidance for Health Care Professionals



Perinatal hepatitis C (HCV) occurs when the virus is passed from a pregnant person to the fetus in utero or during childbirth. This is known as “vertical transmission.” It occurs in 5-6 % of pregnancies when the pregnant person has HCV.



Hepatitis C testing is recommended during each pregnancy.

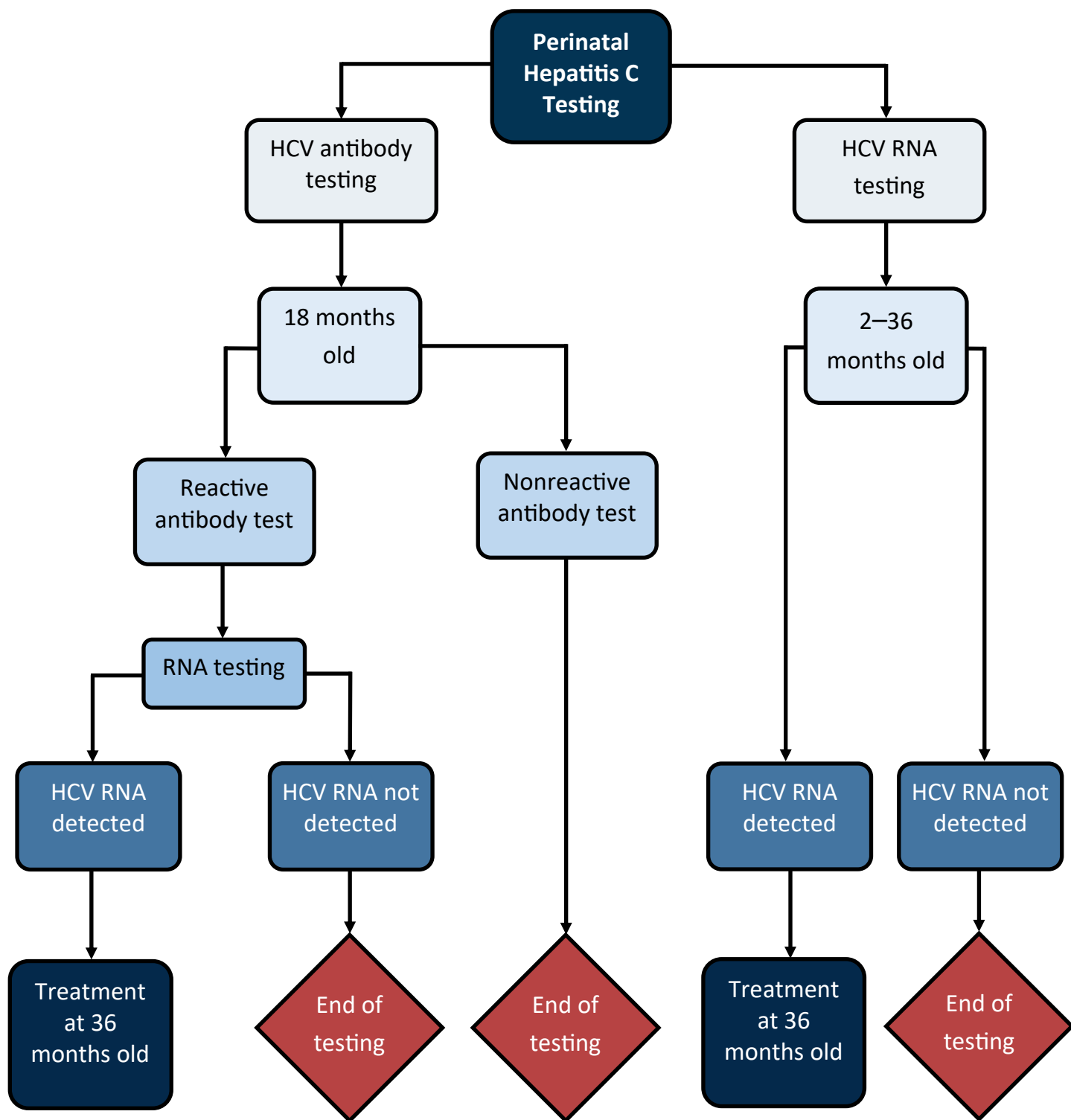
- Children can receive RNA testing starting at 2 months of age, and antibody testing should not occur before 18 months of age. Testing done outside these ranges is considered to be inaccurate.
- Timely diagnosis of an HCV infection is important. Following a reactive HCV antibody test, labs should automatically perform an HCV RNA confirmatory test, also known as reflex testing.
- Regular testing for infants born to an HCV-positive parent can keep the family engaged and help link the child to HCV treatment as soon as possible.



Hepatitis C treatment can begin at 3 years of age or older.

- Hepatitis C is curable with 8–12 weeks of treatment (oral direct-acting antiviral medication). Early testing and treatment can reduce liver damage. HCV medication is approved for people 3 years of age and older.
- People cannot receive treatment while pregnant. However, testing people while pregnant can reduce the risk of loss to follow up for both the pregnant person and the infant.

Perinatal Hepatitis C Testing and Treatment Algorithm



*Before 1 to 2 months of age, HCV RNA testing is not recommended given the low sensitivity early in a child's life and the potential for false-negatives due to intermittent viremia.

