Getting tested for Hepatitis C

- A blood test, called a Hepatitis C Antibody Test, is used to find out if someone has ever been infected with Hepatitis C.

- The Hepatitis C Antibody Test, sometimes called the Anti-HCV Test, looks for antibodies to the Hepatitis C virus. Antibodies are chemicals released into the bloodstream when someone gets infected.

- Test results can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to come back. New rapid tests are now available in some health clinics and the results of these tests are available in 20 to 30 minutes.

- Most people who get infected with the Hepatitis C virus develop a chronic, or lifelong, infection. This is known as chronic Hepatitis C.

- However, some people are able to get rid of, or “clear,” the virus.

What does a non-reactive Hepatitis C Antibody Test result mean?

- A non-reactive or negative antibody test means that you are not currently infected with the Hepatitis C virus.

- However, if you think you might have been exposed to Hepatitis C in the last 6 months, you will need to be tested again.

What does a reactive Hepatitis C Antibody Test result mean?

- A reactive or positive antibody test means you have been infected with the Hepatitis C virus at some point in time.

- Once people have been infected, they will always have antibodies in their blood. This is true if they have cleared the virus or still have the virus in their blood.

- A reactive antibody test does not necessarily mean that you currently have Hepatitis C and a follow-up test is needed.

What to do if the Hepatitis C Antibody Test is reactive

- If the antibody test is reactive, you need an additional test to see if you currently have Hepatitis C. This test is called a RNA test. Another name used for this test is a PCR test.

- If the RNA or follow-up test is:
  - Negative - this means you were infected with Hepatitis C, but the virus has now been cleared from your body.
  - Positive - this means you currently have the virus in your blood.

- If you have a reactive antibody test and a positive follow-up test, you will need to talk to a doctor experienced in diagnosing and treating Hepatitis C.

For more information

Talk to your doctor, call your health department, or visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis.