



COUNTY OF ERIE

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COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

FACTS ABOUT HEPATITIS C VIRUS IN CHILDREN

- The burden of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the population of western New York and Erie County has been increasing over the past few years, especially among women of childbearing age. The ongoing opioid epidemic is one of the key drivers of this infection.
- HCV is spread by sex, by shared needle use (intravenous drug use), by contaminated needles used in tattoos and substance use, and from mother to child.
- Most HCV cases are asymptomatic, but some patients with HCV may proceed to develop liver damage and liver cancer after a few years.
- HCV is treatable, especially if caught early. HCV treatment is now approved for adults and for children age 3 years or older.
- HCV screening is recommended for all pregnant women at least once during their pregnancy. This is especially important for women who have a history of prior drug use, tattoos, or sexually transmitted infections.
- Babies or older children who are born of mothers with proven or suspected HCV should be screened, as well. Children in the foster care system with biologic mothers with a history of substance use or if substance use history is unknown are at a higher risk of hepatitis C exposure compared to the general population.
- Pediatricians should consider HCV screening for children at risk.
- Screening of infants who were born of mothers with HCV may be accomplished by either a blood test for HCV antibody at age 18 months or older, or with an HCV PCR blood test from age 2 months to 17 months of age. This test can be done by a primary physician, pediatrician or other health care provider.

Continued

- The Pediatric Infectious Disease Clinic at UBMD Pediatrics/Oishei Children's Hospital welcomes referrals for infant HCV screening and management of infected infants or children. Please call 716-323-0150 for referrals and appointments.



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