# Half Who Test Positive for Hep C Fail to Confirm Result

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), just half of Americans who test positive for the hepatitis C virus (HCV) ever receive necessary follow-up testing to confirm a chronic infection. The health agency analyzed data from a study of multiple areas in the country and published its findings in the CDC report Vital Signs.

Initially, hepatitis C is identified through an antibody test conducted through a blood sample. Those who test positive must receive an RNA test to determine if they are still infected—about 20 percent will clear the virus on their own—and should therefore seek treatment.

“Complete testing is critical to ensure that those who are infected receive the care and treatment for hepatitis C that they need in order to prevent liver cancer and other serious and potentially deadly health consequences,” CDC director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, said in a release.

The researchers examined data from eight areas across the United States and found that just 51 percent of those who received a positive hep C antibody test underwent a subsequent RNA test. This leaves that group unaware of their hep C status and unable to receive proper medical care.

To counteract this phenomenon, the CDC has issued revised guidelines to health care providers in regards to hepatitis C testing, stressing the importance of follow-up testing.

To read the CDC release, click here.

To read the Vital Signs report, click here.

To read the updated hep C testing guidelines, click here.

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