Mother’s Day: Raising Hepatitis Awareness

May 13, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Imagine that you just gave birth to your first baby and it is your first Mother’s Day. However, instead of celebrating, you are worried. When you were pregnant, a blood test confirmed that you have chronic hepatitis C virus infection. There is a small chance that you may have passed hep C to your child, but you don’t know yet whether you did or not.

This is the reality for many women. Living with hepatitis C is difficult enough. Transmitting hep C to another human is harder to bear, and if that human is a baby, that pain is magnified. Add to this, the waiting to find out if your precious baby just has the hepatitis C-antibody or will be a child who has the virus.

Hepatitis C is the most common bloodborne virus in the U.S. It may be transmitted if a person’s blood is exposed to blood that carries the virus. This includes from mother to baby, known as vertical transmission. The risk is small, especially compared to more common ways hep C is transmitted. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates vertical transmission risk at about 4%.

Mother-to-infant transmission is the leading cause of childhood hepatitis C infection with vertical transmission rates ranging from 3 percent to 10 percent. A recent study published in the University of Pittsburgh’s Pediatrics journal reported that seven out of ten babies born to women with hepatitis C are not screened. Between 2006 and 2014, the prevalence in women with hepatitis C increased by 60 percent.

Women with hepatitis C face multiple issues that tend to be gender-related. To learn more about these issues, visit Women and Hepatitis C and Family Planning and Hepatitis C.

For information about pregnancy and hepatitis B, click here.

We need to eliminate viral hepatitis in everyone, for everyone. Share the hope this Hepatitis Awareness Month that we can #StopHep @hepatitismag.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.