Tests for Hepatitis C

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Your doctor will do a physical exam to evaluate your overall health and do additional tests to check your liver. According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention there are several different tests your doctor may order.

What tests need to be done?
*Two blood tests are done to confirm if you have Hepatitis C. The first blood test looks for "antibodies" to the Hepatitis C virus. Antibodies are released into your bloodstream when a person becomes infected. If the test comes back positive for HCV antibodies then a second blood test is done to confirm by looking for the presence of the Hepatitis C virus. If this test comes back positive it means the Hepatitis C virus is currently in the blood.

*Liver Function tests, also called a liver panel which is a specific blood test to determine if your liver enzyme levels are elevated, this shows how well your liver is working.

*A genotype test that determines the type of Hepatitis C virus strain you have.

*A viral load test (RNA) is done to determine the amount of virus present in your body.

*An ultrasound exam that shows a visual image of your liver.

*A liver biopsy, which is removal of a tiny bit of your liver, to see if there is structural damage. A Fibroscan, which is, transient elastography, is a non-invasive procedure. No needles or IV's are used. Both ways help determine damage or scarring in the liver, which help stage the liver's condition.

*MRI and/or CAT scans may also be done depending on your physician's recommendations.

Important to Know
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention as well as other credible medical resources, recommend a second confirmatory blood test be done. Antibody levels of the HCV virus may not yet be detectable in the first 4 weeks of infection.

75% to 85% of patients develop chronic Hepatitis C which can lead to liver function impairment, liver scarring (cirrhosis), or cancer and liver failure.

Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver cancer and liver transplants in the United States. Patients need to be aware of how to manage the disease, prevention measures to take from spreading HCV and treatment.

Have you been tested for Hepatitis C? Have you had follow up tests to determine your liver condition? Where are you at in your Hep C journey?

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