

## Hepatitis C and Your Baby

Hepatitis C is a virus that spreads by coming into contact with infected blood. It can spread through sharing needles, sexual contact, or from mother-to-child during pregnancy. If hepatitis C is not treated, it may lead to serious liver problems or liver cancer. There are medicines to cure the hepatitis C infection before problems happen.

### Testing for Hepatitis C

Blood tests are done to check for hepatitis C. Your newborn baby has **not yet** been tested for hepatitis C because children must be at least 2 months old for the test to be accurate.

- **Have your baby tested when they are 2 to 6 months old.** This blood test is called hepatitis C RNA and uses one small vial (3 mL) of blood. If they have hepatitis C, they will need to follow up with an infectious diseases or liver doctor (hepatologist) for monitoring and treatment evaluation.
- If you have older children who have not been tested, they should also be tested for hepatitis C.
  - If they're under 18 months of age, they will get the hepatitis C RNA test.
  - If they're older, they may have a different blood test, called a hepatitis C antibody test.

### Human Milk

Human milk has a lot of benefits and will not spread the hepatitis C virus to your baby. If your nipples are bleeding or cracked, bottle-feed until the skin has healed. During this time, you can pump and throw away the milk to keep your supply.

### Prevention

Hepatitis C cannot spread through hugging, kissing, or sharing silverware. Do not share shaving supplies, toothbrushes, tweezers, or nail clippers. **If you have ongoing hepatitis C, get treatment for yourself. This is the best way to protect yourself and your baby.**