

UOA MS

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Patient Name:

Special Instructions:

Follow Up:

Hepatitis C During Pregnancy

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. If you are pregnant and have hepatitis C, the chance of your unborn baby (*fetus*) being infected with hepatitis C is the same whether your baby is born by vaginal delivery or cesarean delivery. With either method of delivery, the chance is low that your baby will become infected. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine available for hepatitis C.

The risk of infection to the fetus is increased if:

- You have a high hepatitis C virus (HCV) count in your blood.
- You have high levels of quantitative RNA levels in your blood.
- You have HIV.
- Your water breaks 6 hours or more before the baby is delivered (*prolonged rupture of the membranes*).
- An internal fetal monitor is used during labor.

CAUSES

Hepatitis C is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. It is passed through contact with blood containing HCV. More specifically, HCV can be passed through sexual intercourse, sharing needles, and sharing other personal items like razors and toothbrushes.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms occur 30 to 60 days after exposure to the virus. However, many people do not have any symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Tiredness.
- Loss of appetite.
- Nausea.
- Pain in the upper abdomen, over the area of the liver.
- Yellow color in the skin and whites of the eyes (*jaundice*).
- Dark colored urine.
- Very light or gray stool.

DIAGNOSIS

Hepatitis is suspected during a physical exam. Blood tests may be done to confirm the diagnosis.

TREATMENT

There are no vaccines or treatments available to lower the risk of spreading hepatitis C to your baby. You will need to keep regular appointments with your caregiver so your liver function can be checked.

Pregnant women with brain dysfunction (*encephalopathy*), blood clotting problems, or who are severely ill should go to the hospital. Treatment in the hospital may include:

- Getting fluids through your vein (*IV fluids*).
- Correcting any imbalances of salts in the bloodstream (*electrolytes*).
- Giving blood and platelets for the blood clotting problems.
- Being put on complete bed rest.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

If you are not severely ill:

- Practice safe sex and use condoms. Condoms are not necessary if you and your partner are not having sex with other people (*monogamous*).
- Get plenty of rest and sleep.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Protect your abdomen from injury (*trauma*). Trauma could rupture a swollen, enlarged liver.
- Follow your caregiver's instructions and take your medicines as recommended.
- Only take medicines as directed by your caregiver. Check with your caregiver before taking any new medicines including over-the-counter medicines. You may need a different dosage or may need to avoid taking certain medicines if liver damage is possible.
- Take your vitamins and supplements as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop nausea, tiredness, and loss of appetite.
- Your urine is dark and your stool is light or gray.
- You develop pain in your upper abdomen.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow.
- You have a fever.
- You develop abdominal pain.
- You develop bruising or bleeding problems.
- You develop a severe headache.

Document Released: 01/09/2011 Document Revised: 08/29/2012 Document Reviewed: 04/29/2012

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