

Viral & Chronic Hepatitis



Coding & Documentation¹

Category B15–B19 Viral Hepatitis

Detailed documentation is necessary for proper code selection.

- Identify the **type** and indicate **acute** or **chronic**. Also, specify the **causal agent** or **behavior**
 - If viral hepatitis is not specified as acute or chronic, assign the appropriate code for **unspecified viral hepatitis** from **Category B19**
 - Viral Hepatitis in remission, any type, code to Hepatitis chronic, by type**
- Acute hepatitis generally resolves within a few months from the date of onset. In other cases, the disease becomes a long-term or chronic illness.
- If left untreated, chronic hepatitis can cause serious health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death

Viral Hepatitis Types

- Hepatitis A** – caused by ingesting water or food contaminated with fecal matter
- Hepatitis B** – spread through bodily fluids during sexual contact or through blood transfusions
- Hepatitis C** – blood-borne, spread through direct contact with infected blood
- Hepatitis D** – also known as delta, cannot occur in the absence of hepatitis B
- Hepatitis E** – acute condition caused by ingesting contaminated food or water, which does not lead to chronic hepatitis

Hepatitis A and E are acute in nature and do not lead to chronic hepatitis. Hepatitis B, C and D viruses can cause chronic, sometimes lifelong conditions.

NOTE: The information listed here is not all-inclusive and should be used as a reference only. Please refer to the most current ICD-10 coding and documentation guidelines at www.cms.gov

Key Terms

- Autoimmune hepatitis** — caused by the body’s own immune system attacking hepatic cells of the liver, typically due to genetic predisposition or environmental exposure
- Chronic hepatitis** — inflammation lasting longer than six months
- Hepatic cirrhosis** — late stage of hepatic fibrosis with changes to the organ structure
 - Caused by many liver diseases and conditions, such as hepatitis and chronic alcoholism
- Hepatic fibrosis** — chronic injury or inflammation causes a buildup of scar tissue
- Hepatocellular carcinoma** — most common form of liver cancer, which is caused either by genetic predisposition, hepatitis, or underlying cirrhosis
- Hepatomegaly** — enlarged liver
- Lobular Hepatitis** — affects one or more of the four (caudate, quadrate, left, right) lobes of the liver
- Viral hepatitis** — acute or chronic inflammation caused by viruses

Related Conditions

Chronic hepatitis not elsewhere classified		Hepatic failure	
ICD-10	Description	ICD-10	Description
K73.0	Chronic persistent hepatitis NEC	K72.1–	Chronic hepatic failure
K73.1	Chronic lobular hepatitis NEC	K72.90	Hepatic failure, unspecified
K73.2	Chronic active hepatitis NEC	K70.4–	Alcoholic hepatic failure
K73.8	Other chronic hepatitis NEC	K76.6	Portal hypertension
K73.9	Chronic hepatitis NEC	K76.7	Hepatorenal syndrome
		K76.81	Hepatopulmonary syndrome
Cirrhosis		Other related conditions	
ICD-10	Description	ICD-10	Description
K74.–	Biliary cirrhosis	K75.4	Auto-immune hepatitis
K70.3–	Alcoholic cirrhosis of liver	K70.9	Alcoholic liver disease, unsp.
K74.6–	Other & unsp. cirrhosis of liver	C22.–	Malignant neoplasm of liver and intra-hepatic bile ducts
Code also, if applicable:			
Risk factors/behaviors/comorbid conditions — F10–F19, Z72.5–			
Note the exclusions and code sequencing instructions in the tabular list.			

¹ International classification of diseases 10th revision clinical modification: ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians, 2020

Viral Hepatitis C (HCV)¹

Viral Hepatitis B (HBV)²

Signs and symptoms of viral hepatitis may or may not be present. Only lab tests can confirm which viral agent is present.

Lab Types: • Qualitative — confirms presence/absence • Quantitative — measures amount found

Screening

HCV Antibody Test

- **Non-reactive/Negative**
 - HCV not present
 - Never had HCV
 - Recent HCV infection
 - 2–9 months to produce antibodies
 - Weak immune system
 - May be unable to produce antibodies
- **Reactive/Positive**
 - HCV present
 - Possible current HCV infection
 - Additional test needed
 - History of HCV
 - Virus cleared/resolved naturally
 - Virus medically treated/cured

Testing

HCV RNA viral load test

- **Undetectable**
 - No HCV found in bloodstream
 - Spontaneously cleared
 - Medically cured
 - Recently infected, less than 2 weeks
 - Within lower limit of detection (LLOD)
 - Varies, can be as low as <5 IU/mL
- **Detectable < LLOQ**
 - HCV present in bloodstream
 - < lower limit of quantification (LLOQ)
 - Amount too small to measure
- **Detectable**
 - HCV present in bloodstream

HCV is classified as **chronic viral hepatitis C** when test results return **reactive** HCV antibodies and **detectable** HCV RNA viral load for longer than 6 months.

Hepatitis B

- **Acute HBV infection**
 - Presence of surface antigen HBsAg and immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibody to HBcAg
 - Seropositive for hepatitis B e antigen (HBeAg)
 - Indicates virus is highly infectious
- **Chronic HBV infection**
 - Persistence of HBsAg for at least 6 months (with or without concurrent HBeAg)
 - Principal risk marker for chronic liver disease and liver cancer
 - **Often undiagnosed until onset of advanced liver disease**

Hepatitis B with delta agent

- **Hepatitis D virus (HDV)** requires HBV for replication.
 - Acute or chronic
 - High concentration of Immunoglobulin G (IgG) and Immunoglobulin M (IgM) anti-HDV, and detection of HDV RNA in serum
- **Acute HBV with acute HDV** can be mild to severe, but the outcome is usually full recovery.
- **Chronic HBV with acute HDV** is the most severe type because of the accelerated progression to cirrhosis and liver-related death.
- **Chronic HDV** is very rare.
 - **HBV vaccination is the only way to prevent an HDV infection**

CDC Recommendations³

- Hepatitis C screening at least once in a lifetime for all adults aged 18 or older, except in settings where the prevalence of HCV infection is <0.1%
- Hepatitis C screening for all pregnant women during each pregnancy, except in settings where the prevalence of HCV infection is <0.1%
- Routine periodic testing for persons with ongoing risk factors, while risk factors persist:
 - IV drug use — including those who injected once or a few times many years ago with shared needles, syringes or other drug preparation equipment
 - Persons with select medical conditions:
 - HIV, history of maintenance hemodialysis; persistent abnormal ALT levels; history of transfusion or organ transplant, including clotting factor concentrate prior to 1987; history of transfusion or organ transplant, including blood/blood components prior to 1992
 - Healthcare, emergency medical and public safety personnel exposed to HCV positive blood
 - Children born to mothers with HCV infection

1 www.treatmentactiongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Diagnostics_0.pdf

2 www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hepatitis-d

3 www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/rr/rr6902a1.htm