

Hepatitis C on the rise among reproductive-aged women

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The number of hepatitis C virus (HCV) cases reported in reproductive-aged women in the United States has increased substantially in recent years. Thus, more children are being born to HCV-infected mothers than at any time since HCV became detectable. The findings, published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, suggest a need for routine HCV screening during pregnancy.

The incidence of HCV infection has increased among young persons who inject drugs, about half of whom are women of reproductive age. As such, concerns have arisen about the risk of HCV transmission from [pregnant women](#) to their infants.

To assess the extent of HCV infection in reproductive-aged and pregnant women, as well as in infants born to them, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) analyzed two of the largest population data sets available in the United States - the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) of the CDC and the Quest Diagnostics Health Trends national database. The data showed that HCV cases essentially doubled among reproductive-aged women between 2006 and 2014, from 15,550 to 31,039.

Applying the Quest HCV infection rate among pregnant women to annual live births, about 29,000 HCV-infected women give birth each year, meaning that about 1,700 infants would acquire HCV this way annually. However, only 200 childhood cases are reported to the NNDSS each year, suggesting that cases are underreported. According to the

researchers, these findings should inform discussions about HCV screening programs for pregnant women.

More information: *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2017).
<http://annals.org/aim/article/doi/10.7326/M16-2350>

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