

Position Statement

The management of infants, children, and youth at risk for hepatitis C virus infection

Ari Bitnun

Canadian Paediatric Society, Infectious Diseases and Immunization Committee, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Correspondence: Canadian Paediatric Society, 100–2305 St Laurent Blvd, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4J8, Canada.

E-mail info@cps.ca, website www.cps.ca

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Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection affects 0.5% to 1.0% of the Canadian population. Most paediatric HCV infections are a consequence of vertical transmission or, among youth and young adults, the result of engaging in high-risk behaviours, such as injection drug use and unprotected sexual activity. It is now recommended that all infants, children, and youth with one or more risk factors be screened for HCV infection. Treating chronic HCV infection with direct-acting antivirals has been shown to achieve sustained virologic suppression in 97% to 100% of children as young as 3 years old. Paediatricians and family physicians have an important role in educating youth regarding HCV infection risks and prevention, and in advocating to government and public health authorities for comprehensive harm reduction interventions targeting at-risk youth, accessible treatments, and routine prenatal screening for HCV.

Keywords: *Children; Direct-acting antivirals; Hepatitis C virus; Vertical transmission*

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Consultant: *Noni E. MacDonald MD*

Principal author: *Ari Bitnun MD*

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