Non-Perinatal Hepatitis C Cases in Clark County

General Non-Perinatal Hepatitis C Information

Background

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) uses liver cells to reproduce and as the body's immune system works to defend against the virus, inflammation, injury, and scarring of the liver may occur. This virus is found in the blood of persons who have this disease and is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person.

Transmission & Risk

The incubation period averages 6 to 9 weeks (range: 2 to 6 months). The time from exposure to virus in the blood is 1 to 3 weeks. HCV is primarily spread by direct contact with human blood, including:

- Injection drug use (most common means of HCV transmission in the United States)
- Receipt of donated blood, blood products, and organs (rare due to blood screening)
- Needle stick injuries
- Birth from an HCV infected mother

While having sex with an infected person is an inefficient means of transmission, one should still take the necessary precautions (wearing and using condoms correctly, vaccination against hepatitis B).

In most medical and dental settings within the United States, there is no risk of spreading hepatitis C; however, there have been some reports of HCV being spread in hemodialysis units where supplies or equipment in clinics without proper infection control measures.

Symptoms & Complications

Most people infected with HCV do not have symptoms. Those who do develop symptoms may have fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, and yellowing of the eyes and skin. Chronic hepatitis C does not usually show infection until the virus damages the liver enough to cause signs and symptoms of liver disease, including bleeding and bruising easily, dark colored urine, itchy skin, weight loss, swelling in legs, and more.

Testing, Diagnosis, Treatment

Testing is recommended for anyone at an increased risk for HCV infection, such as:

- Current or former drug users
- Everyone born between 1945 through 1965
- All persons with HIV infection
- Children born to HCV-positive mothers
- And more

There are two blood tests that can determine if you have been infected with hepatitis C. Anti-HCV (antibody to hepatitis C) is usually done first and if positive, should be confirmed with an HCV RNA. HCV RNA will detect if the virus is present in blood indicating that there is a current infection.

Individuals with hepatitis C should consult with physician specialists knowledgeable about hepatitis C to obtain the most up-to-date recommendations regarding treatment. It is important to note that prior infection with HCV does not protect against later infection with the same or different genotypes of the virus.

More information can be found here: https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/infectious-disease-control-manual/section3/section-3-hepatitis-c

Clark County Related Discussion

The highest reported cases in Clark County was in 2017 (214 cases) and the lowest reported cases was in 2020 (121 cases), there is a 41.1% decrease between 2017 and 2021. The total cases included suspected, probable, and confirmed. Table 1 shows the breakdown of case classification with probable and confirmed being the majority of cases.

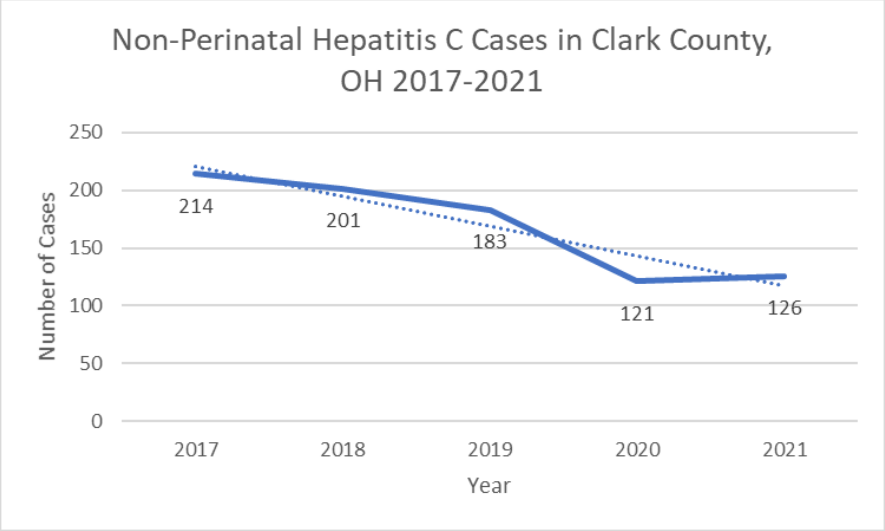

Figure 1 *Hepatitis C Cases 2017-2021*

	Suspected Total	Probable Total	Confirmed Total
2017	4	102	108
2018	1	93	107
2019	1	91	91
2020	0	67	54
2021	1	71	54

Table 1 *Hepatitis C Case Classification*