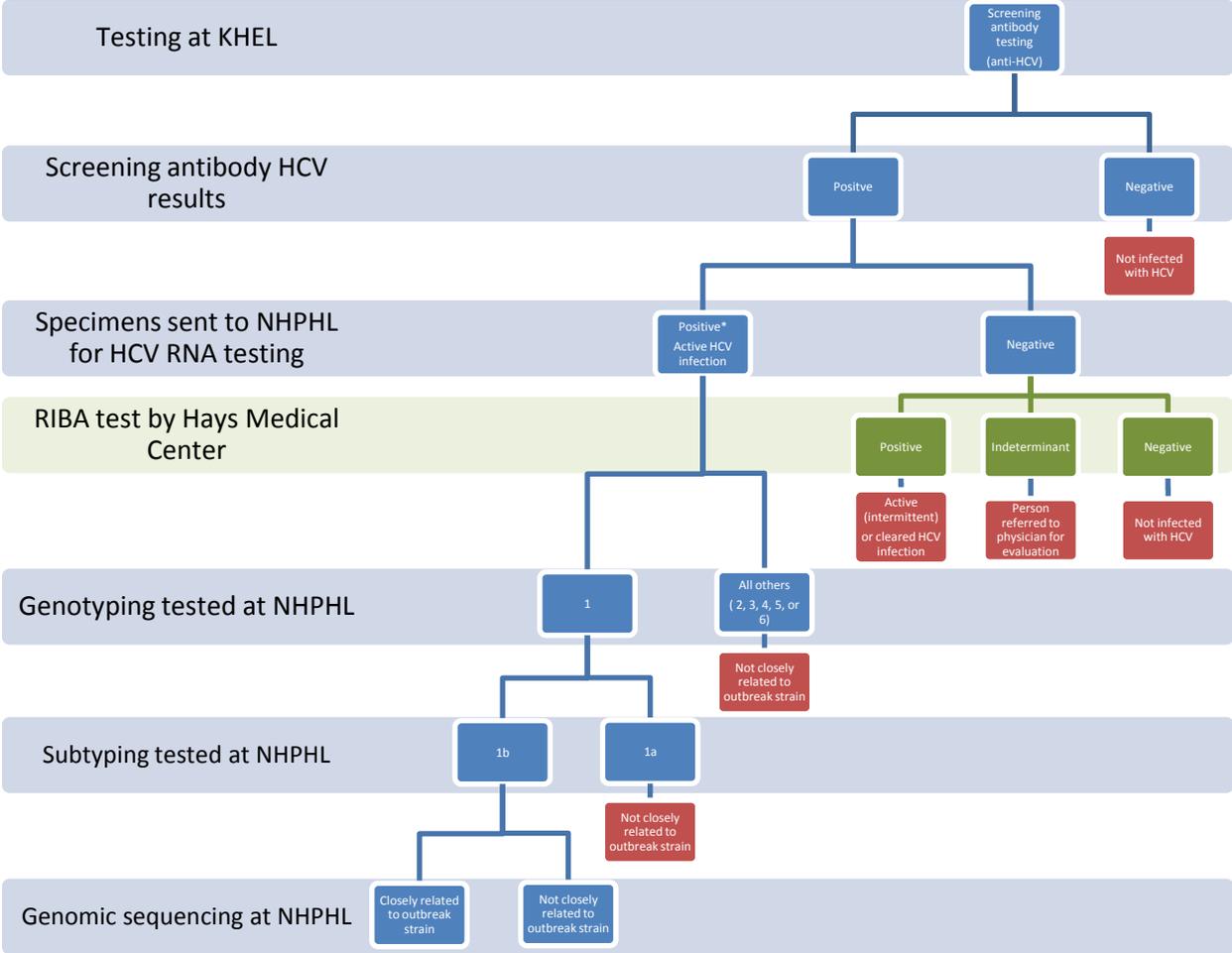


Laboratory Testing Information



*All specimens with positive HCV RNA tests are forwarded to CDC for additional testing; these results might differ from previous tests.

KHEL = Kansas Health and Environmental Laboratories

HCV = hepatitis C virus

NPHL = New Hampshire Public Health Laboratories

RIBA = recombinant immunoblot assay

Hepatitis C Tests

- Screening antibody HCV (Anti-HCV) – This antibody test is used as a screening tool that will show whether a patient has developed antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. An antibody is a substance found in the blood that the body produces in response to a virus. Having a positive antibody test means that a person was exposed to the virus at some time in his or her life. There is a small chance (i.e., less than 5%) that a person with a positive screening anti-HCV test has not truly been exposed to HCV. This is known as a “false positive” result. Additional testing will usually help identify when this has occurred.
- HCV RNA – This test is performed only on persons with positive anti-HCV tests. It is used to confirm whether the virus is still present in the person's bloodstream. A positive HCV RNA result means that a person has an active infection of hepatitis C. A negative HCV RNA result following a positive anti-HCV result means that a person was infected with HCV at one time but has now either cleared the infection or has intermittent viremia (virus is still present but is not always detectable). A person with a positive anti-HCV test and a negative HCV RNA result should consult with a physician for evaluation and additional testing. Hays Medical Center will arrange for patients in this situation to have a more specific test, called a RIBA test as described below.
- RIBA (recombinant immunoblot assay) – This test is a more specific test for antibodies to HCV. This means that there is less of a chance for a “false positive” result. A patient with a positive RIBA test is very likely to have truly been exposed to HCV. This test is generally used when the screening anti-HCV test is positive but the HCV RNA test is negative.
- Genotyping and subtyping – The genotyping test is used to assist with diagnosis and to help guide patient care; this test is also helpful for epidemiological studies. There are six (6) genotypes and multiple subtypes of HCV. Genotype 1 subtypes a and b (i.e., 1a and 1b) are the most common in the United States.
- Genomic sequencing – This test is used for epidemiologic studies to help determine the relatedness of HCV strains between persons.