



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

ADPH urges awareness of hepatitis during May

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Ronada Anderson, MSW, LGSW
(334) 206-5364

One in every 10 Americans is affected by some form of liver disease. The liver, the largest organ in the body after the skin, is essential for survival. If the liver is not working properly, a person can become very sick and can even die.

The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge the public to learn the risk factors of viral hepatitis. The month of May has been designated as Hepatitis Awareness Month, and May 19 is the first national observance of Hepatitis Testing Day.

The word "hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Toxins, certain drugs, some diseases, heavy alcohol use, and bacterial and viral infections can all cause hepatitis. Hepatitis is also the name of a family of viral infections that affect the liver. The most common types are hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Did You Know...

- 3.5 to 5.3 million Americans are living with chronic (lifelong) viral hepatitis—hepatitis B or hepatitis C. Most of them do not know that they are infected, placing them at greater risk for severe, even fatal, complications from the disease and increasing the likelihood that they will spread the virus to others.
- A specific blood test is the only way to know if you have viral hepatitis.
- Hepatitis A virus spreads when a person ingests contaminated food or water, is exposed to contaminated objects, or has been in close contact with an infected person.
- Hepatitis B and C viruses can cause chronic hepatitis, leading to cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.
- Anyone can get hepatitis B or C, but some populations are disproportionately burdened with these infections, including African Americans; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; past and current injection drug users; persons born between 1945-1965; and gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.

- Hepatitis B can be transmitted through exposure to blood or through sex. Hepatitis C is mainly transmitted through exposure to blood.
- Hepatitis A and B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. There is no hepatitis C vaccine.
- Treatments exist for both hepatitis B and C.

“As a part of our observance, we join the CDC’s Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy and other agencies to implement the Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis,” said Jane Cheeks, director of the Divisions of HIV/AIDS and STD Prevention.

This plan seeks to accomplish the following goals:

- Increase the proportion of Americans who are aware of their viral hepatitis infection.
- Reduce the number of new cases of hepatitis C infection.
- Eliminate mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B.

For more information, visit adph.org/hepatitis.