



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabamians at risk are urged to learn more about viral hepatitis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health urges the public to learn the risk factors of viral hepatitis during May, Hepatitis Awareness Month.

A recent outbreak of hepatitis C and HIV in Indiana reminds us that rural states are not immune to communities affected by increases in injection drug use that can lead to hepatitis C transmission. People who inject prescription or street drugs are at risk for transmission of hepatitis B and hepatitis C through sharing needles and drug-preparation equipment.

Viral hepatitis (inflammation of the liver) is caused by viral infections and referred to as hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, hepatitis D, and hepatitis E.

One in every 10 Americans is affected by some form of liver disease. More than 75 percent of adults with hepatitis C are baby boomers (persons born between 1945 and 1965).

Facts...

- 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; gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; and persons born between 1945-1965.
- 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 can be transmitted through exposure to blood or through sex.
- Hepatitis C is mainly transmitted through exposure of blood-to-blood contact and often has no symptoms.
- Hepatitis B and C viruses can cause chronic hepatitis, leading to cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.
- Hepatitis A and B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. There is currently no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.

- Treatments are available for both hepatitis B and C. There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A.
- Hepatitis D and E are uncommon in the U.S. Hepatitis D can be prevented by hepatitis B vaccination in persons who are not already HBV infected. Hepatitis E usually results in acute infection.

“It is important to know that through successful treatments, many people can be cured of hepatitis C,” Dr. Mary McIntyre, Assistant State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, said. “We urge local and state partners serving at-risk clients of viral hepatitis C to implement prevention and care strategies to address an ongoing epidemic.”

For more information, contact Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator Ronada Anderson at (334) 206-5364, and for fact sheets on hepatitis visit cdc.gov/hepatitis.

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