Hepatitis Testing Day 2022

Millions of Americans are living with viral hepatitis. #HepTestingDay urges you to find out whether you're one of them.

May 19, 2022 By Trent Straube

Thursday, May 19, marks Hepatitis Testing Day (#HepTestingDay) 2022. Scheduled in the middle of Hepatitis Awareness Month (#HepAware), it's a chance to bring attention to the liver disease and to promote hepatitis testing, treatment and vaccinations.

Specifically, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, the goal of #HepTestingDay is "to help raise awareness of hepatitis B and hepatitis C and to encourage more individuals to learn their status. It is a day for people at risk for viral hepatitis to be tested and for health care providers to educate patients about viral hepatitis and testing."

> The CDC estimates only half of patients are aware they have hepatitis. Children under age 6 rarely show any symptoms. The disease can take decades to be detectable, which underscores the urgency of vaccination to stop the spread.#HepatitisAwarenessMonth #HepAware2022 pic.twitter.com/gpDphBNSeG
>
> — Oklahoma Alliance for Healthy Families (@OKHealthyFam) May 16, 2022

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver

cancer, the need for a liver transplant and death. Hepatitis can be caused by a number of factors. According to HepMag.com's Introduction to Hepatitis, these include:

- Toxins and chemicals, such as excessive amounts of alcohol
- Autoimmune diseases that cause the immune system to attack healthy tissues in the body
- Fat, which may cause fatty liver disease
- Microorganisms, including viruses.

In the United States, the three most common types of viral infections are hepatitis A, B and C. They are spread via contaminated food and water (hepatitis A) and shared needles and sex (hepatitis B and C). Transmission via blood transfusion is now very rare. Folks living with HIV have a higher risk for coinfection with viral hepatitis. Effective vaccines are available for hep A and B. What's more, hep C is curable in most cases (but not HIV and hep B).

> Don't let Hepatitis B win! Getting yourself tested, vaccinated, and talking to your doctor are three steps you can make today! #HepatitisAwarenessMonth #HepatitisB #HepAware2022 pic.twitter.com/PzQ0qezCVL
>
> — Asian Health Equity (@CAHE_AHC) May 18, 2022

It's estimated that 2.4 million Americans were living with chronic hep C between 2013 and 2016 (about 1% of the adult population), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). What's more, 14,242 people died of hepatitis C in 2019, and acute hep C cases quadrupled from 2009 to 2019. These numbers will likely climb, spurred by the opioid crisis and injection drug use. (Some 108,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, a new record.)

A syndemic approach is essential to comprehensively addressing public health issues including #ViralHepatitis, #HIV and others. Learn more with HepVu's resources: https://t.co/b496tqwfAv pic.twitter.com/QLjiCb1pjG

— HepVu (@HepVu) May 16, 2022

HepVu.org offers infographics, articles and maps about viral hepatitis in the United States. The site sums up recommendations for hepatitis testing from the CDC as follows:

- Hepatitis A—Routine testing for hepatitis A prior to vaccination is not necessary or recommended but may be considered among individuals with a high likelihood of previous infection.

- Hepatitis B—Pregnant women during each pregnancy, gay and bisexual men, people who inject drugs, anyone born or whose parents were born in areas where hepatitis B is common. In addition, the CDC released updated vaccination guidance this April recommending universal hepatitis B vaccination for adults 19 to 59 years of age and is considering an expansion of its hep B screening guidelines to include once in a lifetime screening for all persons 18 years of age and older.

- Hepatitis C—All adults aged 18 and older and pregnant women during each pregnancy, anyone with ongoing risk and medical conditions, such as people who inject drugs.

- Hepatitis D— People with a positive hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAG), or current hepatitis B infection, may need hepatitis D testing. You can find a more detailed explanation of hepatitis D testing recommendations here.



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Last year, the federal government released a national plan to end viral hepatitis with five main goals for the next five years:

- Prevent new viral hepatitis infections;
- Improve viral hepatitis–related health outcomes of people with viral hepatitis;
- Reduce viral hepatitis–related disparities and health inequities;
- Improve viral hepatitis surveillance and data use;
- Achieve integrated, coordinated efforts that address the viral hepatitis epidemics among all partners and stakeholders.

In related news, see “Remembering Naomi Judd as a Powerful Voice for Hepatitis C Advocacy,” "Mysterious Hepatitis Outbreak Hitting Kids in U.S. and U.K." and “Pamela Anderson, Who Once

Had Hepatitis C, Heads to Broadway [VIDEO]."

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