National Hepatitis Testing Day 2021

Over 2.3 million people have hep C in the United States. The liver disease can be cured—but first, you must know your status.

May 19, 2021 By Trent Straube

Wednesday, May 19, marks National Hepatitis Testing Day (#HepTestingDay) 2021. Not only is it a chance to raise awareness of the liver disease, but it's also an opportunity to get tested and learn your status—and whether you need treatment or a vaccine.

> Adults need vaccines too. With this online tool, answer a few questions to learn if you need #hepatitis A and/or B vaccines: https://t.co/Bv6MUnMvlG pic.twitter.com/hWzi3U5ItO
>
> — CDC Hepatitis (@cdchep) May 18, 2021

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It 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. The viruses can be transmitted a number of ways, such as by eating contaminated food (in the case of hep A) and sharing needles and injection drug paraphernalia (in the case of hep C, which is why that epidemic is linked with the ongoing opioid crisis). Vaccines are available to prevent hep A and B, but currently, there is no hep C vaccine.

As HepMag.com explains:

> Hepatitis A virus (HAV), hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) infect liver cells called hepatocytes, which provide the best conditions for these viruses to reproduce. In response to the infection, the body's immune system targets the liver, causing inflammation (hepatitis). If the hepatitis is severe (which can happen with HAV and HBV) or goes on for a long period of time (which can happen with HBV and HCV), hardened fibers can develop in the liver, a condition called fibrosis.
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> Over time, more and more normal liver tissue can be replaced by hardened scar tissue, which can obstruct the normal flow of blood through the liver and seriously affect its structure and ability to function properly.

It's estimated that over 2.3 million people are living with hep C in the United States. For data on hepatitis in your state and county, visit HepVu.org, which offers updated and interactive maps. Presented by Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health in partnership with Gilead Sciences, HepVu also includes interviews with hepatitis experts and advocates as well as sharable infographics.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website offers additional information. For example, it includes the ABCs of the three main hepatitis viruses:

- Hepatitis A is easily prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. In recent years, widespread outbreaks of hepatitis A have been occurring across the United States.
- The hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all infants at birth as well as adults at risk, but many people were infected before the vaccine was widely available.
- The CDC now recommends all adults and pregnant women get tested for hepatitis C. Treatments are available that can cure hepatitis C.

Find more facts about hepatitis, including the different types, transmission routes and available treatments and community resources, on the Basics page of HepMag.com, a sister publication of POZ. And you can read about hepatitis C and HIV coinfection in POZ magazine here. HepMag's

Introduction to Hepatitis notes:

> As with so many diseases, we've come a long way in understanding viral hepatitis, notably two chronic and serious forms: hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Several drugs are now on the market to manage hepatitis B, and a growing number of agents are available to cure hepatitis C in more than 90 percent of people who are treated. At the same time, we're continually learning how to use approved medications much more easily and effectively.
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> Medicine is also making progress in managing and treating other forms of hepatitis and liver disease such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), alcoholic liver disease, autoimmune hepatitis, and primary biliary cholangitis (PBC).

But in order to take advantage of this medical progress, you have to know whether you have hepatitis, which is why it's important to get tested. Search online to find local organizations that offer testing.

> #HCPs: #hepatitisA outbreak data is updated each week. Check the @CDCgov website every Monday for up-to-date information on #hepA cases: https://t.co/OZU5i6C2Ln pic.twitter.com/QKcbB7BKNZ
>
> — CDC Hepatitis (@cdchep) May 17, 2021

HepTestingDay (also referred to as NHTD) was launched in 2011 with the release of the Department of Health and Human Services Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis.

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