



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WALGREENS OFFER FREE ASSESSMENTS ON NATIONAL HEPATITIS TESTING DAY – MAY 19



HONOLULU – National Hepatitis Testing Day will be observed in Hawaii on Monday, May 19. The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) in collaboration with Walgreens, is offering free risk assessments at all 18 Walgreens pharmacies on the islands of Oahu, Hawaii, and Maui.

DOH encourages people with insurance to get tested through their primary care provider. For those who are uninsured, the department and Hep Free Hawaii, a local coalition, will offer free hepatitis B and C screenings at clinics and other community-based sites statewide.

“Most people with hepatitis B or C don’t know that they have it,” said Thaddeus Pham, viral hepatitis prevention coordinator. “If undetected, hepatitis B and C may lead to liver disease, liver cancer, or even death. With better insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act and more effective hepatitis treatments available, people with hepatitis B and C now have better options to take care of themselves before they become ill. The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome.”

Hawaii has the highest rate of liver cancer in the United States, and Hepatitis B and C are the most common known causes of liver cancer in Hawaii. The DOH Immunization Branch estimates between 1 and 3 percent of people in Hawaii have hepatitis B, and approximately 23,000 are living with hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B and C are spread through contact with blood and body fluids. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that anyone who has been exposed to blood through needle use, blood transfusion, non-sterile equipment, or tattooing should be tested for both hepatitis B and C. Anyone born in a country with high rates of hepatitis B, especially countries in Asia and the Pacific, should be screened for hepatitis B. Anyone born from 1945-1965 (“baby boomers”) should also get a one-time test for hepatitis C, regardless of any known risk.

“If your loved ones might be at risk, they can easily get a free risk assessment at their local Walgreens starting May 19,” Pham said. “If appropriate, Walgreens staff will encourage them to ask their doctor to get tested for hepatitis B or C. Taking this simple test now can mean avoiding liver disease or even liver cancer later.”

Individuals with insurance may go to their primary care provider or local Walgreens to request a risk assessment for hepatitis B and/or C (flyer attached). Walgreens pharmacists will refer at-risk persons to their primary care provider for testing. Walgreens will NOT be offering testing on-site.

Individuals without insurance may call Aloha United Way 211 or go to www.hepfreehawaii.org to find the free screening location nearest them (flyer attached). Not all sites will offer hepatitis B testing. Testing will be based on eligibility and availability at each site.

For more information about National Hepatitis Testing Day, go to www.cdcnpin.org/HTD.

For more information about hepatitis resources and events in Hawaii, go to www.hepfreehawaii.org.

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