



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**STATE URGES TESTING FOR HEP B AND C
IN HONOR OF WORLD HEPATITIS DAY, July 28**

HONOLULU – Governor Neil Abercrombie and Lt. Governor Brian Schatz have declared this Saturday, July 28, as Hepatitis Day in Hawai'i, coinciding with World Hepatitis Day. The proclamation recognizes the importance of hepatitis education and encourages testing for those at risk.

“Often called the silent epidemic, most people with hepatitis B or C don’t have symptoms for many years,” stated Thaddeus Pham, DOH Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator.

“People with hepatitis B and C shouldn’t wait until they feel sick to be tested because there are many things, including treatment, they can do to take care of themselves before becoming ill. The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome.”

The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is joining others across the nation and world to help raise awareness and support for improvements in prevention, diagnosis and treatment for people living with chronic viral hepatitis B and C.

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

(more)

“Many people with hepatitis B and C get liver damage or cirrhosis from the disease, which can be minimized by making healthy choices such as not drinking alcohol,” Pham said.

Hepatitis B and C are spread through contact with blood and body fluids. The 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. Hepatitis B is easily spread from mother to child through contact with blood and other body fluids.

The DOH recommends anyone who may be at risk for hepatitis B and C to go to their healthcare providers to get tested. For those with little to no insurance, there are many DOH and community clinics statewide that offer free screenings to help people to find out their hepatitis B and C status. Individuals can call Aloha United Way 211 or go to www.hepfreehawaii.org to find the free screening location nearest them (flyer attached).

More information on hepatitis B and C is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis, or by calling 1-888-443-7232.

For more information about World Hepatitis Day, go to www.aminumber12.org.

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