



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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DOH OFFERS FREE HEPATITIS B AND C SCREENINGS ON NATIONAL HEPATITIS TESTING DAY – MAY 20



HONOLULU – National Hepatitis Testing Day will be observed in Hawaii on Monday, May 20, 2013. In collaboration with Hep Free Hawaii, Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) clinics and other community-based sites are offering free hepatitis screenings to the public on May 20 to encourage people to find out their hepatitis B and C status. National Hepatitis Testing Day events will also help to raise awareness within communities and remind people with insurance to get tested through their primary care provider.

“Often called the silent epidemic, most people with hepatitis B or C don’t have symptoms for many years,” stated Health Director Loretta Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H. “People with hepatitis B

(more)

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 they become ill. The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome."

According to 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 the most common known causes of liver cancer in Hawaii, and Hawaii has the highest rate of liver cancer in the United States.

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. Anyone born from 1945-1965 ("baby boomers") should also get a one-time test for hepatitis C, regardless of any known risk.

"If you are at risk, you should ask your doctor to get tested for hepatitis B or C. Putting off this simple test now can have dangerous health implications later on, such as liver disease and cancer," said Fuddy.

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.cdcpin.org/HTD.

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

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