



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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WORLD HEPATITIS DAY PROMOTES AWARENESS, TESTING IN HAWAII

HONOLULU – Gov. Neil Abercrombie and Lt. Gov. Shan S. Tsutsui have declared July 28 as World Hepatitis Day in Hawaii, encouraging residents to recognize the importance of hepatitis education and promoting testing for those at risk. The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is joining others across the nation and world to raise awareness and support for improvements in prevention, diagnosis and treatment for people living with chronic viral hepatitis B and C.

“Hepatitis is a silent epidemic, and most people with hepatitis B or C won’t have symptoms for many years,” stated Thaddeus Pham, DOH adult viral hepatitis prevention coordinator. “It is important for adults to get tested for hepatitis B and C, especially those born in Asia or the Pacific Islands (for hepatitis B) and baby boomers born from 1945-1965 (for hepatitis C).”

According to DOH Immunization Branch estimates, 1 to 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 the state has the highest rate of liver cancer in the United States.

“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 they become ill,” Pham said. “The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome.”

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.

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 determine 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.

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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