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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protect Yourself Against Hepatitis and Get Tested

DuPage County - The month of May is designated as Hepatitis Awareness Month, with May 19 marking Hepatitis Testing Day. DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) and national public health organizations are raising awareness about viral hepatitis and the importance of prevention, testing, and vaccination. Getting tested is the only way to know if you have hepatitis A, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C. **CDC recommends all adults get tested for [hepatitis B](#) and [hepatitis C](#) at least once in their lifetime and pregnant women get tested during each pregnancy.**

The word ‘hepatitis’ means inflammation of the liver. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications, and certain medical conditions can cause hepatitis, but oftentimes it is a virus that is responsible. In the United States, the most common hepatitis viruses are [hepatitis A](#), [hepatitis B](#), and [hepatitis C](#). Many people with [hepatitis](#) do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected. If symptoms occur with an acute infection, they can appear anytime from 2 weeks to 6 months after exposure. Left untreated, hepatitis B and hepatitis C can lead to lasting liver damage and even lead to liver cancer. Prevention is possible and getting tested is the first step.

Among DuPage County residents from 2019 to 2022:

- Hepatitis A cases ranged from 8 cases (2019) to 2 cases (2021).
- Hepatitis B cases ranged from 131 cases (2019) to 85 cases (2020).
- Hepatitis C cases ranged from 204 cases (2019) to 99 cases (2020).

Locally and nationally, the number of reported viral hepatitis cases since 2020 may be lower than in years before the COVID-19 pandemic began. This decrease may be related to fewer people seeking healthcare and being tested for viral hepatitis during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Viral Hepatitis Key Facts

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Chronic hepatitis B and hepatitis C are leading causes of liver cancer in the United States.
- Nationally, about 66% of people with hepatitis B are unaware of their infection and about 40% of people living with hepatitis C do not know they are infected.

-More-

Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

- **Both hepatitis A and hepatitis B are preventable with safe and effective vaccines, and hepatitis C is curable with prescribed treatment - preventing liver damage and further spread.**
- The hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for all children at one year of age and for [adults who may be at risk](#), including travelers to certain international countries.
- Shortly after birth, babies should receive the first dose of [hepatitis B vaccine](#). Three doses of the hepatitis B vaccine are recommended for children. CDC recommends all adults through age 59 and adults aged 60 or older with risk factors get [vaccinated](#) if they were not vaccinated as a child. If you are age 60 or older and do not have risk factors, you may choose to get vaccinated.
- There is currently no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, but treatments are available that can cure hepatitis C. Most people with hepatitis C can be cured in just 8 to 12 weeks.

DCHD offers hepatitis C testing and treatment referrals through our [STD Clinic](#). To schedule an appointment, call 630-682-7400. Talk with your healthcare provider about testing, treatment, and prevention of viral hepatitis; more information is also available at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/awareness/HepatitisABCs.htm.

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