## **Idaho Viral Hepatitis - News**

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## NATIONAL HEPATITIS TESTING DAY BEING OBSERVED THROUGHOUT

## **IDAHO ON MAY 19<sup>th</sup> – SHOULD YOU BE TESTED?**

**BOISE** – The Idaho Viral Hepatitis Advisory Council and partner agencies are launching a campaign throughout the month of May to shed light on the current national hepatitis epidemic by raising awareness and encouraging priority populations to get tested. Idaho Governor C. L. "Butch" Otter has proclaimed May 19th, 2014, to be National Hepatitis Testing Day in Idaho. Viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer and it is estimated that 4.4 million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis. The goal of this important campaign is to assist agencies in the promotion of hepatitis testing and encourage Idahoans, who are at risk for the disease, to get tested.

Most people with Hepatitis B & C are unaware that they are infected and can live decades without any symptoms or feeling ill in any way. With the disease being left untreated over time, it can cause lead to serious liver damage and liver failure. That is why it is important for those who are at a high risk for having Hepatitis to be tested early so that liver damage can be avoided and/or minimized.

Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with infectious blood, semen, and other body fluids from having sex with an infected person, sharing contaminated needles to inject drugs, or from an infected mother to her newborn. Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for all infants, older children and adolescents who were not vaccinated previously, and adults at risk for Hepatitis B infection. Asian and Pacific Islanders make up five percent of the U.S. population but account for over 50 percent of Americans living with Hepatitis B. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all people born in Asia and the Pacific Islands get tested for Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C is transmitted through contact with the blood of an infected person, primarily through sharing contaminated needles or other equipment to inject drugs. There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C. Nearly three in four people with Hepatitis C were born from 1945 through 1965, also known as the "Baby Boomer" age group. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all Baby Boomers receive a one-time Hepatitis C test. In addition to Baby Boomers, the following groups of people should also be tested due to their increased risk:

- Current or past injection drug users,
- Those treated for a blood clotting problem before 1987,
- Those who received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992,
- Those on long-term hemodialysis treatment,
- Those with have abnormal liver tests or liver disease,
- Those exposed to blood through a needle stick or other sharp object injury, or
- Those infected with HIV.

The Idaho Viral Hepatitis Advisory Council encourages residents with identified risk factors to take the initiative and get tested for Hepatitis either on National Hepatitis Testing Day on May 19<sup>th</sup>, or any other time they visit their health care provider. During the month of May, various clinics and agencies throughout the state will be highlighting their hepatitis testing and awareness activities. To find out if there are any special events or testing opportunities in your region, you may access CDC's National Hepatitis Testing Day interactive map at <a href="http://www.cdcnpin.org/HTD/HTD.aspx">http://www.cdcnpin.org/HTD/HTD.aspx</a>.

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Source: The Idaho Hepatitis Advisory Council (IHAC)