



For Immediate Release

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Citywide Events Including Free Hepatitis Screenings Planned for World Hepatitis Day July 28

Local Communities Join Global Effort to Eliminate Threat of Hepatitis B and C, Which Infect Nearly 250,000 in NYC

New York, NY, July 26, 2016 – A number of citywide events including free hepatitis screenings and forums will be held on World Hepatitis Day July 28th with a renewed focus on preventing and treating hepatitis B and hepatitis C in New York City. The activities are being promoted by the Hep Free NYC Network, which is seeking to raise awareness and drive New Yorkers to take action.

The theme of World Hepatitis Day 2016 is **elimination**, following the newly ratified World Health Organization (WHO) goal to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030.

Approximately 400 million people worldwide are living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C including over five million Americans and nearly 250,000 in NYC alone.

Hepatitis B and C are **preventable, easily diagnosed and treatable**, but many people don't know they're infected until they are seriously ill with liver failure or liver cancer. New Yorkers are encouraged to use this opportunity to join the citywide, statewide and global elimination movement. The first step is simply for individuals to learn whether they may be at risk of hepatitis B or C, and then seek testing or care, if needed.

Hashtags for World Hepatitis Day 2016:

#Nohep
#Worldhepday
#HepFreeNYC
#hepatitis

Full details regarding these and other World Hepatitis Day events are available at HepFreeNYC:

- Free Hepatitis B & C Screenings at Mount Sinai, 17 E. 102nd St. lobby, Manhattan (1:00 – 4:00 PM)
- Free Hepatitis C Screenings at Consulate General of Mexico, 27 E. 39th St., 2nd Floor, Manhattan (10:00 AM – 12:00 PM)
- Charles B. Wang Community Health Center Instagram Awareness Competition (All day)
- Educational Presentation and Free Hepatitis B & C Testing at Visiting Nurse Service of NY Chinatown Community Center, 7 Mott Street, Manhattan (10:30 AM - 3:00 PM)
- Free Harlem Hep C Screening, Educational Forum and Health Fair (JULY 25) – 127 W. 127th St., 3rd Floor, Manhattan (Forum 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM; Health Fair & Free Screening 1:00 – 5:00 PM)
- Liver Health Forum at Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders (SAGE), 305 Seventh Ave., 15th Floor, Manhattan (6:45 – 7:45 PM)

Other free year-round multi-media resources and services:

- HepFreeNYC or NYC Health Department “Hepatitis” websites
- NYC Health Department materials including Hepatitis C: the Facts, Hepatitis B: the Facts
- Text LIVER to 877877 to find testing and care in NYC
- Download the NYC Liver Health Mobile App free on Android or iPhone
- List of organizations providing ongoing testing programs in NYC
- Hepatitis testing and care site locator by zip code or borough

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CDC: Viral Hepatitis Kills More Americans than Any Other Infectious Disease

All five types of the hepatitis virus (A, B, C, D, E) can cause short-term or “acute” infection. Hepatitis B and hepatitis C may also cause long-term or “chronic” infection that can result in serious and life-threatening complications. Both viruses are transmitted through blood, while hepatitis B is also sexually transmitted. Both viruses attack the liver, over many years often without symptoms. Deaths in the U.S. associated with hepatitis B or hepatitis C average more than 20,000 a year, and [hepatitis C alone kills more Americans](#) than any other infectious disease, including HIV. According to the World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) 1.4 million people around the world die every year as a result of viral hepatitis -- more than from HIV or malaria. In New York City, it is estimated that 100,000 residents are living with hepatitis B and nearly 150,000 are living with hepatitis C – and about half do not know they are infected.

Hepatitis C: Get Tested, Get Cured

New Yorkers can take a simple [Hepatitis C risk assessment](#) at the NYC Health Department website. Individuals **may be at risk for hepatitis C** infection if they:

- Were born between 1945 and 1965 – members of the Baby Boom generation, who may harbor long-term infection, currently represent the majority of people [dying from Hepatitis C-related illness](#).
- Have shared drug use equipment (e.g. needles or inhalation tools);
- Received a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to 1992;
- Were born in, or received medical care in, countries where hepatitis C is common (e.g. Egypt, Russia, Pakistan);
- Are HIV-positive.

Anyone who thinks they may be at risk for hepatitis C should seek testing either at a clinic offering free screening or by asking their primary care doctor. If the virus is confirmed with a blood test, new oral medications offer a cure rate of better than 90%. There is currently no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B: Get Tested, Get Care

New Yorkers can take a simple [Hepatitis B risk assessment](#) at the NYC Health Department website. The CDC encourages screening for **people at risk of hepatitis B** infection including:

- People from countries where hepatitis B is prevalent (e.g. in Asia and Africa);
- Household contacts of infected persons;
- People who have shared drug use equipment (e.g. needles or inhalation tools);
- People who are HIV-positive;
- Men who have sex with men.



Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to infant during birth, but transmission can be prevented with medical care. People living with Hepatitis B can have the disease managed with antiviral medications and undergo regular liver health assessments with a doctor.

Hepatitis B Vaccine: There is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis B infection. Universal vaccine programs for infants have greatly reduced new cases of hepatitis B in the U.S. The goal of Hep Free NYC is to reduce mother to child transmission to zero through support of the national [Universal Hep B Birth Dose Initiative](#). Still, many New Yorkers did not receive the vaccine at birth because it wasn't yet available or because they were born in another country. This is another reason why screening is important for anyone who may be at risk of hepatitis B -- even if not infected, they, and members of their household and community, can be protected through vaccination.

Prevention & Treatment of Viral Hepatitis Associated with Substance Abuse

America faces a growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse, and evidence suggests that millions of Americans who became addicted to medications including opioids, anti-anxiety pills or stimulants, have transitioned to intranasal or injection administration, and sometimes to illicit drugs such as heroin. Outbreaks of hepatitis C infection as well as cases of hepatitis B and HIV linked to sharing of drug use equipment have been reported in many areas of the country, including among youth. In NYC, the Borough of Staten Island has been especially hard hit by this prescription medication addiction, along with a rise in heroin use and overdoses.

Any New Yorker seeking assistance for themselves or someone with an addiction can find assistance and dozens of citywide treatment centers through [Life Net](#) (1-800-LIFENET). In addition to the resources above, the programs can often provide assistance with screening and care as well as harm reduction services like provision of sterile syringes.

About Hep Free NYC

Hep Free NYC is comprised of two citywide multi-sector networks, the NYC Hep B Coalition and the NYC Hep C Task Force, whose members include community based organizations, health care organizations, providers, advocates and other interested parties. The mission is to build community capacity and coordinate efforts for effective prevention, screening and treatment to reduce hepatitis B and C among NYC residents.

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