



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 7-7-14
Mid-Michigan District Health Department
615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702
www.mmdhd.org
SUBMITTED BY/MEDIA CONTACT: Leslie Kinnee,
Public Information Officer
989-831-3669, kinnee@mmdhd.org



Viral hepatitis: a silent killer

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C affect the lives of over four million people in the United States, yet most cases go undiagnosed and untreated for years because many do not experience any symptoms. Without treatment, these viruses can lead to cirrhosis of the liver and more serious health problems, like liver cancer and even death.

Viral hepatitis is caused by a virus that infects the liver. Hepatitis A (HAV) is spread by eating food or drinking water contaminated with HAV or from close contact with a person who has the virus. Hepatitis B (HBV) is spread through contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person, unprotected sex, or from infected mothers to their infants at birth. Hepatitis C (HCV) is spread through contact with the blood of an infected person or by sharing syringes or drug equipment with someone who has the disease.

Some people with hepatitis may never show any symptoms of having the disease. Without a blood test to confirm infection, people can continue to unknowingly spread the disease to others. For those who do experience symptoms, they are flu-like in nature (fatigue, nausea, aching muscles), with anxiety and depression, poor concentration, stomach ache, loss of appetite, dark urine/bright stools, and jaundice (yellowing of skin).

Getting the Hepatitis A and B vaccine can protect against getting HAV and HBV, and early detection and treatment can slow disease progression. Hepatitis A and B vaccines are recommended for all children in Michigan. Both vaccines are also recommended for adults who are at risk of infection and for those who want to be protected from getting HAV and HBV.

The CDC recommends that people born between 1945 and 1965 get a one-time blood test for HCV. Rates of HCV in this age group are five times higher than other adults because the risk of HCV infection was greater in the 1970s and 1980s.

If you are not sure if you are at-risk, the CDC has an online Hepatitis Risk Assessment tool to help determine the need for hepatitis testing or if vaccination is recommended. This tool allows you to privately enter information and receive recommendations based on CDC's guidelines. To access the Hepatitis Risk Assessment tool, visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment.

-more-

2- Hepatitis

Prevention tips include:

- Vaccination for Hepatitis A and B.
- Do not share razors, toothbrushes or other household articles.
- Make sure all tattooing and body piercing are done using appropriate sterilized equipment.
- Never share needles or equipment for injecting drugs.
- Use condoms when having sexual intercourse.
- Get tested for Hepatitis during prenatal visits.

If you think you may have been exposed to hepatitis, or have questions about the vaccines, contact your doctor or the Mid-Michigan Health Department today at:

Montcalm County Branch Office: 989-831-3615

Clinton County Branch Office: 989-227-3111

Gratiot County Branch Office: 989-875-1019

For more information, please visit www.michigan.gov/hepatitis.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

###