National Hepatitis Testing Day

Millions of Americans have chronic hepatitis virus—a leading cause of liver cancer—and don't even know it.

May 19, 2017

Friday, May 19, is National Hepatitis Testing Day (NHTD) 2017. The goal is to remind health care providers and the public who should be tested for viral hepatitis.

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver, and it has several causes, ranging from viruses to excessive alcohol consumption. The three most common types of viral hep infection in the United States are hepatitis A, B and C virus (HAV, HBV and HCV).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, millions of Americans have chronic viral hepatitis and don't know they're infected. The CDC lists four things you should know about viral hepatitis:

1. Hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C are all different diseases.
   Each type of hepatitis is caused by a different virus and spread in different ways. Hepatitis A does not cause a long-term infection, although it can make people very sick. Hepatitis B and hepatitis C can become chronic, life-long infections and lead to serious health problems.
2. Chronic hepatitis is a leading cause of liver cancer.
   Chronic hepatitis B and C can cause serious damage to the liver, including liver damage, cirrhosis and even liver cancer. In fact, more than 60 percent of liver cancer cases are related to hepatitis B or C.
3. Most people with chronic hepatitis do not know they are infected.
   More than four million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis in the United States, but most do not know they are infected. Many people live with chronic hepatitis for decades without symptoms or feeling sick.
4. Getting tested could save your life.
   Lifesaving treatments are available for chronic hepatitis B, and new treatments are available that can cure hepatitis C. Still, getting tested is the only way to know whether you are infected.

What's more, the CDC reports that one quarter of people living with HIV also have HCV and that people at risk for HIV are also at risk for HBV.

NHTD was launched in 2011 with the release of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis.

To learn more about hepatitis, including the different types, the treatments available and community resources, visit the basics page of HepMag.com.

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