



Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities



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PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

To: Local Media Outlets

From: Shelby Pasch, Health Promotion Supervisor

RE: Hepatitis Awareness Month

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Hepatitis Awareness Month

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month. Vaccination for Hepatitis A and B, along with routine screening for Hepatitis C, will decrease chances of infection.

Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) offers vaccines for hepatitis A and B along with free screening and testing for hepatitis C. May is Hepatitis Awareness Month. Hepatitis is defined as inflammation of the liver and has various underlying causes. If left untreated, it may progress from acute to chronic, and may even cause lifelong infection leading to serious liver damage or liver cancer, with symptoms only showing when complications develop. There are at least 5 different types of hepatitis (A-E); the three most common in the United States are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the incidence of hepatitis A has increased 850% from 2014 to 2018 in the United States. In 2020, the State of Michigan reported 43 cases of acute hepatitis B and 713 newly identified cases of chronic hepatitis B, as well as 139 cases of acute hepatitis C, and 4,356 newly identified chronic hepatitis C cases, with males showing a higher rate of prevalence than females. For pregnant women, there were 10 cases of perinatal hepatitis C in 2020.

Hepatitis A (HAV) is usually spread through consuming contaminated food or drink through close contact of an infected person and can even be spread before the infected person shows symptoms. HAV is found in the stool and blood of infected individuals and is very contagious. Although HAV is very easily spread, it is also preventable through a safe and effective vaccine, which is recommended for all children at age one and older. Thanks to the vaccine, the number of HAV cases in the United States has dropped by 95%, as reported by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Please visit us at our website www.cmdhd.org

Hepatitis B is highly contagious and transmitted through direct contact with infected bodily fluids. A person infected with hepatitis B can still be contagious even without the presence of symptoms. Hepatitis B is preventable through a vaccine and is even recommended for newborns, because if a mother is infected, it can be passed to the baby through childbirth.

Hepatitis C is most commonly spread through blood-to-blood contact with an infected person. Today, hepatitis C positivity has seen an incline due to the increase of IV drug use and the sharing of needles, syringes, and other equipment used to inject substances. Hepatitis C causes almost no signs or symptoms, so the only way to know if you are infected is through regular routine screening and testing. Although there is currently not a vaccine for hepatitis C, it is a treatable infection.

Central Michigan District Health Department now offers a Syringe Service Program called Exchange Central. This is an **anonymous and confidential** program that provides participants clean substance administering equipment for injection drug use, overdose prevention medication, hepatitis C, HIV and other STI screening with linkage to care for infected individuals, and free contraceptives, along with community referrals, at no cost to participants to help decrease the spread of infectious blood diseases like hepatitis C and HIV. Exchange Central also allows for secondary exchange meaning that anyone can come in and receive supplies for others. Services have been reduced from in person to by appointment only, due to COVID-19 guidance. Please call or text (989) 259-4549 to make an appointment.

For more information on hepatitis, assistance with scheduling a vaccine appointment, or to learn about CMDHD Exchange Central program, contact any of the Central Michigan District Health Department locations or visit our website at www.cmdhd.org.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org and LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook.

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