

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month



In May, Californians across the state are mobilizing to take action against viral hepatitis during Hepatitis Awareness Month and in preparation for World Hepatitis Day, May 19.

Since the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Immunization Branch implemented its Adult Hepatitis Vaccine Program in 2007 more than 36,000 doses of hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine have been administered to at-risk adults in California. In 2008, the State Office of AIDS integrated hepatitis C virus (HCV) screening into state-funded HIV testing and counseling programs in 54 local health jurisdictions. More than 3,500 individuals were tested for HCV at these programs in 2008.

Hepatitis A, B, and C are caused by separate viruses that attack the liver and are transmitted in different ways.

- Hepatitis A is usually transmitted through contaminated food or water, which may be due to poor hand washing, but can also be transmitted through oral-anal sex with an infected person.
- Hepatitis B (and in some cases hepatitis C) is transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected individual.
- Hepatitis B and C are transmitted by direct contact with blood through sharing syringes (or other drug using equipment) with an infected person and can be passed from a mother to her newborn child before or during birth.
- Hepatitis B and C may also be transmitted through sharing personal items such as razors with someone who is infected.

VIRAL HEPATITIS IMPACTS MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN OF ALL RACES, ETHNICITIES, AND CULTURES.

Vaccines to protect against hepatitis A and hepatitis B infection are safe and highly effective. Unfortunately, no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection is currently available. Many people with hepatitis B or C do not know they are infected.

To help inform the public and medical professionals about the ABCs of viral hepatitis, where to access services, how to find prevention, testing, and treatment guidelines, and more, the Division of Communicable Disease Control recently completed the new [Office of Viral Hepatitis Prevention website](#).