



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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May is National Hepatitis Awareness Month

*Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Encourages the Public to Review
Immunization Records and Learn About Risk Factors for Hepatitis*

Champaign, IL – May is National Hepatitis Awareness Month. The 2008 World Hepatitis Day (May 19, 2008) campaign theme is “Am I Number 12,” a concept designed to communicate the shocking statistic that one in 12 people worldwide are living with either hepatitis B or hepatitis C. While this is far higher than the prevalence of HIV or any cancer, awareness is inexplicably low and the majority of those infected are unaware. Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) encourages everyone to review their immunization records, and learn more about the risk factors, treatment and prevention of viral hepatitis.

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. The most common forms of viral hepatitis include hepatitis A, B and C. Hepatitis A is most often transmitted by ingesting food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. Those most at risk are children in communities with high levels of hepatitis A, travelers to high-risk geographic areas and men who have sex with men. Preventing the transmission of hepatitis A is as simple as utilizing good hand washing techniques with soap and warm water, especially after using the restroom.

Hepatitis B and C are more serious. Hepatitis B and C are blood borne diseases transmitted when blood or body fluids from an infected person enter the body of a susceptible person. Hepatitis C is most-frequently transmitted through injection drug use with a shared needle whereas Hepatitis B is most frequently spread through sexual activity.

Both hepatitis B and C can cause chronic infection which may lead to the development of cirrhosis of the liver and/or liver cancer. Some people infected with hepatitis C initially

may not show any symptoms, and may not know that they have been infected. People in the following risk groups are encouraged to get tested for exposure to hepatitis C:

- People ever notified of receiving blood from a donor who later tested positive for hepatitis C
- People who have ever injected illegal drugs or shared needles
- People who received a blood transfusion or solid organ transplant before July 1992
- People who received blood clotting products made before 1987
- People who have ever been on long-term kidney dialysis
- People with evidence of liver disease (i.e. elevated liver enzymes)

It is possible to prevent hepatitis A and B by getting vaccinated. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. Vaccinations are available from your local health care provider or at the 201 West Kenyon Road location of CUPHD. Please call 217-352-7962 for an appointment. Awareness, counseling, testing and educational campaigns help prevent the further spread of this disease.

The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District also sponsors a Hepatitis Support group to provide support and education to patients, and families of patients, with Hepatitis C or any other form of Hepatitis. The Hepatitis Support group meets the second Wednesday of every month from 6:00pm – 7:30pm at The Forum at Carle, Fritz Room, 611 West Park Street, Urbana. For more information on the Hepatitis Support Group, please contact Penny Shonkwiler at 217-239-7827.

The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District has served the Champaign-Urbana community for the past 70 years. Please join us in celebrating National Hepatitis Awareness Month by reviewing your immunization records and learning about the risk factors of Hepatitis.

For more information about hepatitis and the many other CUPHD programs and services, visit us on the web at www.cuphd.org or call 217-352-7962.

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