



# DAVIS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## News Release

### May Is Hepatitis Awareness Month

(Farmington, Utah) – May is national Hepatitis Awareness Month and World Hepatitis Day is May 19. These observances are intended to increase awareness about the large but often under-recognized burden of disease and premature death associated with viral hepatitis.

About 5 million Americans are living with chronic Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, which together account for the major cause of chronic liver disease and liver cancer. Each year 15,000 people die from these preventable diseases.

In Davis County, 1 case of Hepatitis A, 31 cases of Hepatitis B, and 115 cases of Hepatitis C were reported in 2009. The case counts represent only positive tests reported to the health department. The actual amount of illness in the community is hard to determine because some people have not developed symptoms or been tested.

Many people infected with Hepatitis B or C do not have any symptoms, and may not know they have been infected.

People in the following risk groups should be evaluated by a medical professional and be tested for Hepatitis B and C if they:

- ever injected illegal drugs, even if it was only a few times years ago
- received body piercing or tattoos done with non-sterile instruments
- live in the same household as someone who is a carrier and known to have tested positive for viral hepatitis
- had sexual partners diagnosed with viral hepatitis
- had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992

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- were treated with blood clotting products made before 1987
- have been on long-term kidney dialysis

“If you are at risk for viral hepatitis, you should consider getting tested, even if you have no symptoms,” said Lewis Garrett, director of the Davis County Health Department. “As chronic cases of viral hepatitis are identified, carriers are encouraged to make lifestyle changes that may slow liver damage and learn how to avoid giving the virus to others.”

The best way to prevent Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated. Since the 1990s, children have been routinely vaccinated against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Many adults who have not been vaccinated are at risk for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

Hepatitis A and B vaccines are available through healthcare providers and the Davis County Health Department immunizations clinics. For questions regarding these vaccines and clinic schedules, please call the Davis County Health Department at 801-773-8834 (M, W, F) or 801-298-3919 (T, Th).

Hepatitis B and C can be prevented by:

- not sharing needles or other equipment to inject cosmetic substances, drugs, or steroids;
- not sharing personal items that may have come into contact with an infected person’s blood, such as razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, or glucose monitors;
- not getting tattoos or body piercings at an unlicensed facility or in an informal setting.

For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HepatitisMonth.htm>.

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