
NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes National Viral Hepatitis Testing Day

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Viral Hepatitis Testing Day, Thursday, May 19, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is encouraging individuals to know their hepatitis C status.

A recent study published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* finds more Americans die as a result of hepatitis C infection than from 60 other infectious diseases reported to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—including HIV, tuberculosis and pneumococcal disease—combined. “What is contributing to this is that over 75 percent of hepatitis C cases are in people of the baby boomer age group and this, coupled with years of undiagnosed infection, is leading to liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and ultimately death,” said Sarah Weninger, Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator with the NDDoH. “We encourage everyone born between 1945 and 1965 to talk to their doctor about being tested for hepatitis C.”

Baby boomers are five times more likely to be infected with hepatitis C than the general population, however, there have been rising numbers of reports among young people with the primary risk factor being injection drug use. Other individuals that should be tested for hepatitis C include current and past injection drug users, those who received donated blood or organs before 1992, those on hemodialysis, and those born to a mother with hepatitis C.

There are many sites across North Dakota where individuals at risk for hepatitis C can get tested for no charge. A list of those sites is available at www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Hepatitis/Tested/default.aspx.

For more information, call the North Dakota Department of Health’s Viral Hepatitis Program at 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/disease/hepatitis.

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