



# Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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## HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH

The month of May is Hepatitis Awareness Month in the United States, and May 19th is Hepatitis Testing Day. This May, the Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) would like to raise awareness about this hidden epidemic and encourage those at risk to get tested.

Hepatitis is a serious liver disease most often caused by one of several viruses. In the United States, the most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Millions of Americans are living with chronic hepatitis, yet most don't know it. People can live for decades without symptoms, but over time, chronic hepatitis can cause serious health problems. Talk to your doctor about getting tested. It could save your life.

**Hepatitis A** is a contagious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). It is often spread by eating food or drinking water that is contaminated with infected feces or by touching contaminated objects with your mouth. Hepatitis A can spread easily among people who live together and among sexual partners. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious illness lasting several months and can result in death.

In August 2016, a hepatitis A outbreak began in southeast Michigan. Since then, the outbreak has grown to other parts of the state. People at highest risk of getting hepatitis A include people who use illegal drugs, people who are homeless or move around a lot, people who are or were recently in jail or prison, men who have sex with men, and people with existing chronic liver disease. However, anyone can get hepatitis A. People can take this short quiz to see if they are at risk for hepatitis A: <https://bit.ly/2rSwotb>.

Hepatitis A can be prevented through vaccination and good handwashing. Vaccination for hepatitis A is available for a low cost at BEDHD. To make an appointment to be vaccinated call (269) 798-4133 in Barry County or (517) 541-2651 in Eaton County. More information about the Michigan hepatitis A outbreak can be found at [www.mi.gov/HepAOutbreak](http://www.mi.gov/HepAOutbreak).

**Hepatitis B** is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). It ranges from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe, long-term (chronic) illness that can lead to liver disease or liver cancer. HBV is spread when blood, semen, or another bodily fluid from a person infected with HBV enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sexual contact and sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment. HBV can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for all infants and children age 18 and under and adults who are at risk for HBV infection. People can see if they might be at risk for HBV at <https://bit.ly/2k5IWKG>.

**Hepatitis C** is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks (acute) to a severe, lifelong, chronic illness. For most people, HCV leads to chronic infection and may result in long-term health problems or even death. HCV is spread when blood from a person infected with HCV enters the body of someone who is not infected. Today, most people become infected with HCV by sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Before 1992, HCV was also commonly spread through blood transfusions and organ transplants. There is no vaccine for HCV, but it is treatable. Ninety percent of people who complete treatment will be cured of HCV.

For more information on hepatitis and Hepatitis Awareness Month, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hepawarenessmonth.htm>.

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