



MAY IS HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH

May 17, 2019– The number of new Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) diagnoses among young adults has increased substantially over the last decade, largely as a result of the opioid epidemic, and approximately half of these new infections have been identified in females. As a result, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is recognizing May as Hepatitis Awareness Month and highlighting the importance of testing for hepatitis B and C during pregnancy.

The hepatitis C virus is a bloodborne pathogen transmitted primarily through exposure to infected blood, most commonly through unsterile works used to prepare or inject drugs.

From 2007 to 2018, the number of women of childbearing age (15 to 44 years) with report of a new HCV diagnosis more than doubled from 817 new diagnoses in 2007 to 2,027 new diagnoses in 2018. The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases has recommended all pregnant women get tested for HCV, ideally at the start of prenatal care.

Perinatal HCV occurs when a mother infected with HCV passes the virus to her child in utero or during childbirth. Transmission occurs in approximately 5 to 15 percent of pregnancies in mothers infected with the virus, and approximately 15 to 40 percent of children who receive HCV from their mother will clear the virus without treatment. There are currently no known methods to reduce the rate of HCV transmission from mother to child, no vaccine or prophylaxis for HCV, and the method of delivery has not been shown to decrease mother-to-child transmission.

Early detection, linkage to care, and treatment are key to identifying current HCV infection, slowing disease progression and liver damage and lowering risk of liver cancer. People can live with hepatitis C for decades without experiencing any symptoms or feeling sick. The only way to know if you are infected is with a blood test. In addition, there are new HCV treatments available with minimal side effects that can cure more than 90 percent of persons living with HCV.

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is transmitted from person-to-person through contaminated blood or body fluids. HBV can spread from infected mothers to their infants at birth (perinatal HBV), through unprotected sex or through contact with blood or body fluids of a person who has the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends all women be tested for hepatitis B surface antigen during each pregnancy. Hepatitis B vaccine is also recommended for pregnant women who are identified as being at risk for HBV infection during pregnancy. The HBV vaccine contains no live virus, and there is no apparent risk of adverse events to developing fetuses when hepatitis B vaccine is administered to pregnant women.

In recognition of May as Hepatitis Awareness Month and May 19 as Hepatitis Testing Day, MDHHS and DHD#10 encourage all pregnant women to:



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COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford
Kalkaska
Lake
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Mecosta
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Oceana
Wexford



www.dhd10.org



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- Get tested for hepatitis C, ideally at the start of prenatal care.
- Get tested for hepatitis B virus during every pregnancy.
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis B.

For more information, please contact DHD#10 (www.dhd10.org) or your healthcare provider.

For more information on perinatal HBV, visit cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/perinatalxmtn.htm.

For more information on perinatal HCV, visit michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/PerinatalHCV_617775_7.pdf.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.

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