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For Immediate Release

World Hepatitis Day is July 28

Screening for hepatitis C and vaccinations for hepatitis A and B decreases chance of illness

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) and the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) are recognizing World Hepatitis Day to help raise awareness about viral hepatitis and the steps people can take to prevent and manage the disease. HDNW offers vaccines for hepatitis A and B and free hepatitis C screening and testing, including rapid antibody hepatitis C testing.

“Viral hepatitis is a serious, preventable public health threat that we are diligently fighting,” says Dan Thorell, HDNW Health Officer. “It’s important that we continue to offer education, screenings, and vaccinations to people. And it’s important that people living with hepatitis know about their condition so they can make informed choices about their healthcare.”

There are at least five types of viral hepatitis. The three most common in the United States are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

- Hepatitis A is easily transmitted from person to person or contaminated food. It causes an acute infection that usually improves without treatment but can cause severe illness.
- Hepatitis B and hepatitis C can be spread through sex or sharing needles. They can cause a chronic infection, which can lead to liver disease including cancer.
- There is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis A and B. There is not one for hepatitis C.

Hepatitis symptoms can include fever, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-colored urine, and jaundice, according to HDNW Medical Director Joshua Meyerson. The disease can also cause liver infection and scarring.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), [hepatitis](#) is a group of viral infections that lead to a range of health problems, such as liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure. More than 1.4 million deaths per year are caused by hepatitis B and C alone. WHO has set a goal of ending viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. Some of the key steps people can take to prevent hepatitis are getting vaccinated, practicing safe sex, and avoiding sharing needles or other drug paraphernalia.

Michigan’s Department of Health & Human Services offers low-cost hepatitis C treatment through their [“We Treat Hep C” program](#).

To schedule a screening or hepatitis vaccination, call HDNW locally at 800-432-4121.

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HDNW is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.



Proud member of the [Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance](#): 7 local health departments advocating for public health.