

May 2, 2016

## MAY IS NATIONAL HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH

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**Sanford, Fla.** – In observance of National Hepatitis Awareness Month, the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) is providing free hepatitis testing during the month of May. The intent of the annual observance is to raise awareness about the global impact of viral hepatitis and the importance of preventing hepatitis-related liver disease, including liver cancer.

The Hepatitis Prevention Program in Seminole County will provide free hepatitis testing Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 400 West Airport Boulevard, Sanford.

“Increased screening and testing in order to reduce the burden of illness and death from hepatitis is essential since most people are unaware they are infected with these serious liver diseases,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) recommends baby boomers or anyone born from 1945 to 1965 get tested for Hepatitis C. Baby boomers are five times more likely to have Hepatitis C. The reason that baby boomers have high rates of Hepatitis C is not completely understood. Most boomers are believed to have become infected in the 1970s and 1980s when rates of Hepatitis C were the highest.

“Over time, chronic Hepatitis C can cause serious health problems including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer and even death,” said Tania Slade, Epidemiology Program Manager for DOH-Seminole. “In fact, Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver cancer and the #1 cause of liver transplants.”

Hepatitis is characterized by inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A, B, and C are the most common types of viral hepatitis in the United States. Symptoms of hepatitis, if they are present, include nausea, fever, weakness, loss of appetite and jaundice. Hepatitis A is transmitted by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated with human waste (feces). Hepatitis B is spread through contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. Hepatitis C is usually spread through contact with blood containing the virus. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C (HCV).

For information or assistance on this program, please contact Enid Santiago-Cruz at 407-665-3019 or [Enid.Santiago-Cruz@flhealth.gov](mailto:Enid.Santiago-Cruz@flhealth.gov). Visit [www.SeminoleCoHealth.com](http://www.SeminoleCoHealth.com) for more information about the Hepatitis Prevention Program.

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