



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES ALL BABY BOOMERS (BORN 1945-1965) TO GET HEPATITIS C SCREENING

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is echoing the recently released recommendation of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that all persons born in the United States between 1945 and 1965 ("baby boomers") receive a one-time hepatitis C test. DOH joins local agencies such as Hep Free Hawai'i and others across the nation to help raise awareness and support for improvements in prevention, diagnosis and treatment for people at risk for hepatitis C virus (HCV), especially baby boomers.

"The CDC's new, age-based HCV screening guidelines are an important step in ensuring quality health care for our communities. Often called the silent epidemic, most people with hepatitis C don't have symptoms for many years and consequently don't seek screening and treatment until they have liver disease or even liver cancer," stated Thaddeus Pham, DOH Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator.

The CDC estimates that more than two million baby boomers have HCV, accounting for more than 75 percent of Americans living with this disease. People born from 1945 through 1965 currently are five times more likely to be infected than other adults. More than 15,000 Americans die of HCV annually, yet most people do not know that they have the disease because it is often asymptomatic. Offering a one-time HCV blood test to baby boomers could identify more than 800,000 additional people with HCV and save 12,000 lives.

(more)

DOH Urges all Baby Boomers to Get Hepatitis C Screening

Since 1998, the CDC has recommend HCV testing for anyone at high risk of infection. This group included anyone who has been exposed to blood through needle use, blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to 1992, or non-sterile equipment such as home tattoo needles. The CDC also recommends testing for healthcare, emergency medical, and public safety workers who have been exposed to HCV; babies born to HCV-positive mothers; and people living with HIV. The new recommendation includes all persons born between 1945 and 1965, regardless of whether they fall into these risk categories.

“Baby boomers in Hawai‘i shouldn’t wait until they feel sick to be tested because there are many things, including treatment, they can do to take care of themselves before they become ill. The earlier people know they have hepatitis, the better the outcome,” Pham said. The DOH recommends anyone who meets the CDC recommendations for hepatitis C screening go to their healthcare providers to get tested.

For more information on hepatitis B and C and for resources in Hawai‘i, individuals can call Aloha United Way 211 or go to www.hepfreehawaii.org. More information on hepatitis B and C is also available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis, or by calling 1-888-443-7232.

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