

Health Unit Celebrates World Hepatitis Day July 28th

July 28th marks World Hepatitis Day. The goal of this day is to increase awareness of Hepatitis. Did you know there are several different types of Hepatitis? In Canada, the most commonly seen are Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. Both of these diseases are spread through direct blood to blood contact with an individual who is already infected.

In Canada, an estimated 1 out of every 100 Canadians have been infected with Hepatitis C in their lifetime. ¹ There is an estimated 245,987 people living with Chronic Hepatitis C in Canada.² Many people who are living with chronic Hepatitis C do not know that they have the disease as symptoms may not appear for 20 to 30 years.

Hepatitis can be spread from individual to individual through the sharing of personal hygiene equipment like razors and toothbrushes, and through improperly cleaned equipment from nail salons, spas etc. It can also be spread through the sharing of drug using equipment and tattooing and piercing equipment. One of the keys to curbing the spread of Hepatitis C in our communities is to increase the number of individuals being tested for the disease. Hepatitis C testing requires a blood test that you can ask for from your family doctor, a nurse practitioner or through the local Health Unit.

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent individuals from getting Hepatitis C. Treatment is available, with cure rates of 95% or higher, but reinfection can occur as there are multiple different strains of the Hepatitis C virus.

For more information, visit www.healthunit.org or follow LGLHealthunit on Facebook or Twitter or call the Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853.

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¹ <http://www.catie.ca/en/fact-sheets/epidemiology/epidemiology-hepatitis-c-canada>

² Ibid