



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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MDHHS urges testing as part of Hepatitis Awareness Month

Nearly 2,000 Medicaid beneficiaries being treated for hepatitis C through the We Treat Hep C Initiative

LANSING, Mich. – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has [proclaimed](#) May as Hepatitis Awareness Month and Thursday, May 19 as Hepatitis Testing Day in Michigan.

In recognition, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is urging Michiganders to get tested for hepatitis B and C and highlighting one year of progress of the department's We Treat Hep C Initiative. Launched on April 1, 2021, the initiative is designed to eliminate hepatitis C virus (HCV) in Michigan by increasing access to hepatitis C treatment among Michigan Medicaid and Healthy Michigan Plan beneficiaries. Since April 1, 2021, nearly 2,000 Michigan Medicaid beneficiaries living with hepatitis C have received curative treatment.

Viral hepatitis primarily affects the liver. The hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HCV, the two most common types of viral hepatitis, are leading causes of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplants in the United States.

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.

HCV is spread through contact with blood from an infected person and may also be spread from infected mothers to their infants at birth (perinatal HCV). People with HCV infection are often undiagnosed because they rarely experience symptoms or feel sick. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C; however, there are effective medications that can cure HCV infection when taken once daily for as little as eight to 12 weeks.

“As people infected with hepatitis B or C often do not experience symptoms, testing is critical to detect whether treatment may be warranted,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. “In recognition of Hepatitis Awareness Month and Hepatitis Testing Day, MDHHS is urging Michiganders to ask their health care providers for a hepatitis test at their next appointment.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends HCV testing among all adults at least once in their lifetime, and hepatitis B and C testing among all pregnant people during every pregnancy, regardless of age.

Since the launch of the We Treat Hep C Initiative, there have been 186 new HCV treatment prescribers added; however, the success of the program is highly dependent on the clinical community testing and treating more patients for HCV. To build clinical capacity to treat HCV in Michigan, MDHHS contracted with Wayne State University's [Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center](#) and [Henry Ford Health](#) to provide clinical consultation, case-based discussions and trainings to clinicians to guide them through hepatitis C disease management and treatment. Providers are encouraged to utilize the clinical resources available at Michigan.gov/WeTreatHepC.

For more information, visit the [Hepatitis](#) and [We Treat Hep C](#) webpages.

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