

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES**

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**Heather Howard  
Commissioner**

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### **Department of Health and Senior Services Recognizes May 19 as World Hepatitis Day**

In recognition of World Hepatitis Day today, Department of Health and Senior Services Commissioner Heather Howard reminded state residents about the importance of preventing hepatitis-related liver disease, including liver cancer.

Hepatitis means "liver inflammation" and refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. The most common types are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C—three different contagious liver diseases caused by three unrelated viruses. Hepatitis A typically occurs in an "acute" or time-limited form, while Hepatitis B and C can develop into a life-long, chronic illness.

The best way to prevent Hepatitis A and B is by getting vaccinated. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

One in 12 people worldwide are living with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C. That statistic is the basis for the theme of this year's World Hepatitis Day: "Am I number 12?" Hepatitis has a higher prevalence rate than HIV or any cancer.

"Hepatitis impacts more than 250,000 people in New Jersey, and the damage it does to individuals, families and communities is incalculable," said Commissioner Howard. "I urge New Jersey residents to seek advice from their physicians on how to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Commissioner Howard added, "Often times, fear and the stigma associated with Hepatitis prevents people from getting tested and receiving treatment. It is important for residents at risk to get tested because early diagnosis can help reduce the transmission of viral hepatitis and the spread of this devastating disease."

Hepatitis B is spread through direct contact with infected blood, as well as major body fluid including blood, semen, sweat, tears and breast milk. Hepatitis B is highly infectious. Hepatitis C is spread through direct contact with infected blood, but is very rarely passed on through other body fluids. People with hepatitis B and C can be infected and transmit the disease for years without knowing it.

Although there are vaccines for Hepatitis A and B, no vaccine exists for Hepatitis C. Treatments have limited success, making this infection among the most costly in terms of health care costs, and lost wages and reduced productivity.

More information on hepatitis A, B and C is available from the NJDHSS web site at [nj.gov/health/cd/](http://nj.gov/health/cd/) or from the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/). For more information about the "Am I number 12?" campaign, go to [www.aminumber12.org](http://www.aminumber12.org)

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