



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Abby Hinz RN, BSN, PHN
715-495-1085
abby.hinz@co.eau-claire.wi.us

HEPATITIS C RATES CONTINUE TO RISE
World Hepatitis Day is July 28th

Eau Claire, WI, July 28th, 2017 – According to the CDC, about half of Americans who have hepatitis C don't know it. Today, World Hepatitis Day is a reminder to talk to your doctor, know your risks, and get tested to stay healthy.

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. It is spread by contacting the blood of a person who already has hepatitis C. According to research the virus can stay infectious on surfaces outside of the body at room temperature for up to 6 weeks. Hepatitis C is dangerous because it often does not show symptoms. Once diagnosed, it can be treated and cured. Without treatment hepatitis C can lead to serious liver problems, including cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) or liver cancer. In 2013, hepatitis C caused 19,000 deaths in the United States.

Those most at risk for hepatitis C are baby boomers (people born 1945 to 1965) and young adults with a history of injection drug use. Many baby boomers have been living with the infection for years without knowing it. In young adults, injection drug use and sharing drug use equipment like needles, cottons, water or cookers increases the risk of getting the illness.

Last year there were 80 reported cases of hepatitis C in Eau Claire County, which is more than the reported 65 cases in 2015. The 2016 Eau Claire county rate of hepatitis C reported is higher than the statewide rate.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services reports that over the past five years the rate of hepatitis C reports in Wisconsin increased by 49%. About 90,000 people in Wisconsin have the disease and less than half know it.

The only way to know if you have Hepatitis C is to get tested! Talk with your doctor and get tested. The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin can provide free and confidential Hepatitis C testing for those at risk including: veterans, baby boomers, and those with a history of injection drug use



###