

July 24, 2019

## **WORLD HEPATITIS DAY** *Find the Missing Millions*



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**St. Lucie County, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie is recognizing World Hepatitis Day with an event on Friday, July 26, 2019. We invite you to come out from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at our Fort Pierce location, 714 Avenue C. Testing for hepatitis, HIV, and STDs will be available at no charge. Free vaccines for hepatitis A will be available to anyone and vaccines for hepatitis B will be provided for those who are eligible. More information about viral hepatitis will be available along with giveaways for participants.

Find the Missing Millions is the 2019 World Hepatitis Day campaign theme. The campaign is a call to action for people around the world to join in the quest to find the “missing millions”, the 300 million around the world who are infected with viral hepatitis and do not know. Actions include raising awareness, testing for viral hepatitis, and connecting those who need medical care.

An estimated 2.7 to 3.9 million people in the United States are infected with chronic hepatitis C, in St. Lucie County, there has been a 5-year average of 384 newly identified cases of chronic hepatitis C, and 61 newly identified chronic hepatitis B cases. There are preventative vaccines for hepatitis A and B, and now there is treatment for hepatitis C.

“We invite our community to take advantage of this opportunity to help raise awareness about hepatitis, including how to prevent it and get tested if you have any risk factors,” said Clint Sperber, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County. Take the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Viral Hepatitis Risk Assessment - please go to: <https://www2a.cdc.gov/hepatitis/RiskAssessment/start.html>.

Viral hepatitis is also a global threat. It accounts for 1.34 million deaths globally each year and causes two out of every three liver cancer deaths. Since 75% of people with hepatitis B or C do not feel symptoms, many people may go untested, undiagnosed, and without treatment. Of the estimated 325 million people in the world infected with hepatitis, up to 290 million are living with hepatitis B or C without being aware.

In addition to the global threat of chronic hepatitis, Florida is experiencing an increase in hepatitis A cases. Between January 2018 and July 13, 2019, 2,446 hepatitis A cases were reported; 24

cases in St. Lucie County. The number of reported hepatitis A cases more than doubled from 2016 to 2017 and nearly doubled again in 2018 after remaining relatively stable in previous years. Case counts in 2019 have surpassed those in 2018.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease. Hepatitis A is transmitted from person-to-person through contact with an infected person's feces (poop). This can result from poor hand washing after going to the bathroom. Hepatitis A can also be spread through food or water contaminated with fecal matter or during close contact with others, such as sexual contact. While most patients with hepatitis A will fully recover, some may require hospitalization. Hepatitis A can be prevented with vaccination and proper hand hygiene.

If you are unable to attend our free testing event for World Hepatitis Day on Friday, July 26, DOH-St. Lucie offers comprehensive testing at our Milner location. This blood draw test is for hepatitis B and C, syphilis, HIV and includes testing for gonorrhea and chlamydia. An appointment is not necessary; however, it is recommended. Please call 772-462-3800 for more information on getting tested.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

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