



News Release

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New report shows impact of hepatitis C in Washington State now and in the future
Tomorrow, July 28 is World Hepatitis Day

OLYMPIA – More than 90,000 people in Washington are likely infected with hepatitis C, an infectious disease which can cause liver damage, liver failure, and liver cancer. The Washington State Department of Health [released a report](#) showing the impact of hepatitis C in Washington.

The report describes the scale of the problem and provides recommendations for future action in the areas of prevention, testing, and treatment for hepatitis C virus infections. Each year, there are about 550 hospitalizations in our state for those with hepatitis C, with expenses totaling over \$22 million. There are also over 200 liver and bile duct cancers and 600 deaths in Washington every year linked to hepatitis C.

“Hepatitis C is an alarming epidemic of our time,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Scott Lindquist. “We have an obligation to address hepatitis C by urging screening and the use of medications to treat the disease.”

Most of those infected with hepatitis C were born during the “baby boomer” years of 1945 through 1965. They had high risk of exposure to infected blood through unscreened blood products, medical or dental exposures before modern infection control measures began, and injection drug use.

Recent spread of hepatitis C virus is occurring among younger people—mostly through sharing needles and other equipment used for injecting drugs. Hepatitis C can also pass from a mother to child during delivery.

There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, but newer and better treatments are available to treat the disease. Most people become cured after receiving treatment.

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Many people do not know they are infected. People with hepatitis C may not have symptoms until decades after they were infected. It is important for those at risk to be tested for infection so they can get treated and prevent further spread of the disease.

Check your [risks for hepatitis C](#) and get tested if you learn you might be infected. If you might have hepatitis C, don't share your toothbrush, razor, nail clippers, diabetes equipment, injection drug equipment, or other items that might have blood on them.

[Learn more about hepatitis C](#) and find information on hepatitis C prevention and testing in Washington by contacting the Department of Health's Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator at 360-236-3498.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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