



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Hepatitis is any inflammation of the liver. There are many possible causes, including viruses that affect the liver. The three major types of viral hepatitis are Hepatitis A, B, and C. There are vaccines available to protect us from Hepatitis A and B, but there is no vaccine against Hepatitis C. There are an estimated 4 million people in the U.S. infected with Hep C and most are not even aware of it.

Hepatitis C is acquired through contact with infected blood, or blood-contaminated objects. Many infected people never feel symptoms; however, most people who contract the virus will become chronic carriers, and can spread the disease to others. They are also at risk for permanent liver damage and liver cancer years later.

Garfield County Public Health offers free Hep C testing for individuals with certain qualifying risk factors. These include a history of injection drug use at any time; those who received blood transfusion or tissue transplant prior to 1992; those who received blood transfusion at any time outside of the U.S.; a history of hemodialysis; a sexual partner at any time of an infected person; ever shared needles with an infected person(s).

There are very effective treatments for people infected with Hep C, but they are most successful if started before severe liver damage occurs. There are also excellent resources available to learn about the disease and how to protect yourself and others.

If you would like more information about hepatitis, available vaccines, or to make an appointment for testing, please call Public Health at 945-6614 or 625-5200.

Other Resources:

Hep C Connection: 1-800-522-HEPC (4372) or www.hepc-connection.org

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Viral Hepatitis Program: (303) 692-2780 or www.HepatitisColorado.Info

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: 1-888-4HEPCDC or www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

