



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

Millions of people in the U.S. live with chronic hepatitis, and according to the California Department of Public Health, Humboldt County's rate of new cases of hepatitis C is nearly three times the state average.

An estimated 7,530 county residents were living with the virus in 2017—nearly 1 out of every 18 people.

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services' (DHHS) Public Health Branch says education and prevention can go a long way toward bringing these numbers down.

The three most common types of hepatitis are A, B and C. A and B are both vaccine-preventable, but there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. There are also no vaccines for hepatitis D and E, which are less prevalent.

Hepatitis C is a treatable and largely curable liver disease that is most commonly spread when people share needles or other equipment used to inject drugs. Many people show no symptoms or experience only mild symptoms and do not realize they have the virus. Chronic hepatitis C can lead to liver cancer and cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver, and even death.

"Public Health is working closely with community partners to provide education about prevention and harm reduction efforts as well as encouraging people to get tested and seek treatment," said DHHS Public Health Director Michele Stephens.

She said Public Health has a Syringe Services Program that provides information about overdose prevention, referrals to treatment programs, hepatitis C testing and treatment referrals, needle exchange and disposal, and other services, which can be useful to combat the spread of the virus.

For more information about hepatitis C prevention, transmission, testing and treatment options, contact your health care provider or the North Coast AIDs Project at 707-441-5074 or visit <https://humboldt.gov/NorCAP>.

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