



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Health Department encourages public to learn risk factors for viral hepatitis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Ronada Anderson
(334) 206-5023

The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge the public to learn the risk factors of viral hepatitis during May, Hepatitis Awareness Month. Viral hepatitis is caused by several different viruses, and it can be a serious liver disease.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "More than three million Americans have been infected with hepatitis C, a blood-borne virus which often does not cause symptoms."

People at risk for hepatitis B and C include:

- injection drug users
- people who received a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to 1992
- people who have unprotected sex with multiple partners
- people who get a tattoo or body piercing in unsanitary conditions

One in every 10 Americans is affected by some form of liver disease. The liver, the largest organ in the body after the skin, is essential for survival. If the liver is not working properly, a person can become very sick and can even die.

Ask your physician about your risk of acquiring hepatitis and your possible need for vaccine. Hepatitis A is usually transmitted by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated through fecal matter containing the virus.

Hepatitis B and C are transmitted through blood or body fluids. They are commonly passed on through sexual contact, intravenous drug use, and use of contaminated blood products. Hepatitis B virus can also be passed from mother to infant during birth.

Hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines are routinely recommended for those aged 18 years and younger and for certain high risk adults. Currently, there is not an available hepatitis C vaccine.

For more information, log on to www.CDC.gov/hepatitis.