



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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For Immediate Release: 05.18.15

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**THE AIDS INSTITUTE HIGHLIGHTS EXPANDED
ACCESS TO HEPATITIS TESTING**
RECOGNIZES NATIONAL HEPATITIS TESTING DAY
Releases Updated Hepatitis C Testing Coverage Guide

Washington, DC – In recognition of National Hepatitis Testing Day on May 19th, The AIDS Institute is reminding people not only to get tested for hepatitis B and C, but that the tests, in many instances, cost nothing thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

According to the CDC, an estimated 5 million people in the U.S. have hepatitis C (HCV) or hepatitis B (HBV), yet as many as 75 percent of those infected with HCV or HBV are unaware of their infection. It is also estimated that in the U.S. one in four people living with HIV is co-infected with HCV and 10 percent of those living with HIV are co-infected with HBV. In 2013, the number of reported acute HCV cases increased 20 percent from 2012.

Viral hepatitis can result in serious health problems, such as cirrhosis of the liver or even death. Most people are not aware that they are infected because they often do not feel sick. Once identified, however, they can be referred for treatment, and now in the case of HCV, often cured. In addition, people who know of their infection can take steps to prevent transmission.

“Too many people living with hepatitis are unaware of their infection and not able to take advantage of current medical treatment. We are working hard to inform patients and providers of coverage options. With coverage of HCV and HBV tests, in many instances, thanks to the ACA, people no longer have to pay for them,” said Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute.

The CDC and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommend an HCV screening test for everyone born between 1945 and 1965, regardless of their risk. The

CDC also recommends other people at risk for HCV and high risk for HBV should be regularly screened.

Under health reform, these preventive services can be covered by private health insurance plans, Medicare, and Medicaid, without any patient copayments.

“On this National Hepatitis Testing Day we want to remind patients and their providers to follow the CDC and the USPSTF recommendations for hepatitis B and C,” Ruppal said.

In an effort to assist patients, clinics, and providers in obtaining coverage for HCV testing, The AIDS Institute is releasing an updated [Coverage Guide for Hepatitis C Screening](#). The guide explains coverage of preventive services under the ACA and sets out specific coverage for HCV testing under various types of insurance, including private health plans, Medicaid, and Medicare.

“People are not always aware that they should be tested or can have a test at no charge. Further, health care providers might not be offering their patients the tests or taking advantage of the new coverage opportunities,” said Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “We hope the guide will lead more patients to take advantage of coverage of preventive services and get tested for hepatitis, without cost-sharing.”

For information about National Hepatitis Testing Day, including a location near you to get tested, go to: <http://www.cdcnpin.org/HTD/HTD.aspx>

To access the HCV testing coverage guide go to: <http://bit.ly/1Fgqi6O>

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The AIDS Institute is a national nonprofit organization that promotes action for social change through public policy, research, advocacy, and education.

For more information and to become involved, visit www.TheAIDSInstitute.org or write to us at Info@theaidsinstitute.org, and follow The AIDS Institute on Twitter @AIDSAdvocacy and Facebook at www.facebook.com/The-AIDS-Institute.