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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Nine Hours of Free Hepatitis C Testing at  
PCDOH on May 19, National Hepatitis Testing Day**

BREWSTER, NY—The Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) is offering a full day of free Hepatitis C testing on National Hepatitis Testing Day, Tuesday, May 19, for all New York State baby boomers. Testing starts at 10 a.m. and runs to 7 p.m. at the main health department office at 1 Geneva Road in Brewster. No appointment is necessary. The generation born from 1945 to 1965 is at particular risk and U.S. health officials encourage everyone in this age category to take this one-time test, regardless of any specific risk.

“All Putnam residents in this age category should get tested,” says Health Commissioner Allen Beals, MD. “You can have Hepatitis C infection for years and still feel fine. In fact, more than 3 million Americans are living with this viral disease. Some develop severe symptoms that require hospitalization, but approximately 70 to 80 percent others have only mild illness with few symptoms.”

While chronic Hep C infection goes undetected, liver damage can still occur—with serious long-term consequences such as liver failure, cirrhosis or cancer. Baby boomers are at higher risk because the infection is transmitted through infected blood and comprehensive blood screening was not available until 1992. Most boomers are believed to have become infected in the 1970s and 1980s when rates of Hepatitis C were the highest. Viral hepatitis is a leading infectious cause of death in

the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The good news is that Hepatitis C can be treated with several medications and some of the newer ones have fewer side effects.

Residents who can't make the Free Testing Day on May 19, can call the health department at 845-808-1390 for information about other free testing opportunities.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our website at [www.putnamcountyny.com/health](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health); or visit our social media sites on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](http://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth) and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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