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Commissioner of Health



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 9, 2014

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**Eight Hours of Free Hep 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 for all baby boomers. 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. Testing will be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the main health department office at 1 Geneva Road in Brewster. No appointment is necessary.

“All Putnam residents in this age category should take advantage of this service,” County Executive MaryEllen Odell states. “You can have the infection for years and feel fine, that’s why I got tested last year when the health department began offering it,” she adds.

“An estimated 3.2 million Americans are infected with this viral disease,” explains Health Commissioner Allen Beals, MD. “It can range in severity from mild illness lasting a few weeks, to a serious lifelong illness that damages the liver.” 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.

“The big problem with Hep C is that it is most often silent and you can have it for years,” Dr. Beals continues. “In fact approximately 70 to 80 percent of people with acute Hep C don’t have any symptoms.”

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

Viral hepatitis is a leading infectious cause of death in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Residents who can’t make the May 19th Free Testing Day, can get tested in their physicians’ office or can call the health department at 845-808-1390.

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; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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County Executive MaryEllen Odell was one of the first to take advantage of the PCDOH’s free testing service.

