



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free Hepatitis C Testing at PCDOH on May 18; All Baby Boomers Advised to Have One-Time Test

BREWSTER, NY—The Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) is offering free hepatitis C testing in recognition of National Hepatitis C Testing Day. Testing will take place on Friday, May 18, especially targeted to New York State baby boomers. Anyone can get “Hep C,” but those born from 1945 through 1965 are five times more likely to be infected with the virus. Testing starts at 10 a.m. and runs until 4 p.m. at the main health department office at 1 Geneva Road in Brewster. No appointment is necessary and results are ready in 20 minutes.

“Health officials encourage everyone in this age category to get tested once. You can have Hep C infection without knowing it,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell.

“More than 3 million Americans are living with this viral disease, and nearly 75 percent don’t know that they are infected,” says Interim Health Commissioner, Michael Nesheiwat, M.D. “The reason baby boomers have high rates is not completely understood. Most are believed to have been infected in the 1970s and 1980s when infection rates were highest—before the widespread screening of the blood supply. Because this virus can live in your body for decades without producing any symptoms, it may go untreated and long-term it can cause liver failure, cirrhosis and cancer.” The longer an individual lives with the infection untreated, the more likely they are to develop life-threatening liver disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hepatitis C causes more deaths among Americans than any other infectious disease.

Hep C is primarily spread through contact with infected blood. Baby boomers may have gotten infected from contaminated blood and blood products before routine screening started in 1992. Others may have become infected from injecting drugs, even if they did it only once in the past. Many baby boomers don’t know how or when they were infected.

There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C. Getting tested is the best way to know if an infection exists and then treatment can be started as soon as possible. For many, treatment can cure Hepatitis C.

Residents who are unable to make the Free Testing Day on May 18, can call the health department at 845-808-1390 for information about other free testing opportunities.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), 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, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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