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Hepatitis: “It’s Closer Than You Think”

World Hepatitis Day

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The theme for World Hepatitis Day 2012 is “It’s closer than you think”. The World Health Organization (WHO) is urging governments to strengthen efforts to fight viral hepatitis, and inflammation of the liver that kills about one million people every year. In addition, an estimated 500 million people experience chronic illness from their infection with hepatitis; it is a major cause of liver cancer and liver cirrhosis. It is important to increase public awareness of the problem.

SIX THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS:

1. Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, “ a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infection”
2. Infected people may carry the hepatitis virus unknowingly without symptoms until it causes serious and even fatal liver damage.
3. Hepatitis symptoms include fatigue, appetite loss, abdominal pain or swelling, dark urine, nausea, vomiting, and yellow skin or jaundice.
4. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for every 100 people infected with the Hepatitis C virus, 75 to 85 will develop chronic infection, 60 to 70 will develop chronic disease, five to 20 will develop cirrhosis, and one to five will die of cirrhosis and liver cancer.
5. Chronic Hepatitis C can lead to long-term health problems, including liver damage, liver failure, and liver cancer.
6. Risk factors for Hepatitis B and C include blood transfusions and organ transplants (particularly those done before 1992), illegal drug use via needles, getting tattooed in non-licensed facilities, unprotected sex with multiple partners, long-term dialysis and being born to infected mothers.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Click on the link below to take the five minute risk assessment developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and get a personalized report.

<http://www.cdc.gov/HEPATITIS/riskassessment/>