



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

6400 Goldsboro Road, Suite 450, Bethesda, MD 20817-5846; 301-263-9000; Fax: 301-263-9025

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**Contact: Anne-Louise Oliphant, 301-263-9000
mediaonly[at]gi.org**

CDC Calls for Hepatitis C Screening for 1945 to 1965 “Boomer” Generation Gastroenterologists Who Treat Hepatitis C Say This Action Could Halt Fatal Progression of Liver Virus

Bethesda, MD – August 16, 2012 –The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced new age-based screening recommendations for chronic viral Hepatitis C infection targeted to Americans born between 1945 and 1965. This “birth cohort” screening strategy has important public health implications and is a major change from the CDC’s former recommendation to screen high risk individuals only.

The new recommendations come after February’s publication in *Annals of Internal Medicine* of CDC data that deaths from Hepatitis C are on the rise, with three-quarters of the 2007 deaths among those born in the “Baby Boom” generation. Deaths from Hepatitis C now exceed deaths from AIDS, according to the CDC.

“Hepatitis C is a major public challenge, and the anticipated wave of patients with advanced liver disease and cirrhosis because of years of silent chronic infection has yet to peak,” commented ACG President Lawrence R. Schiller, M.D., FACP. “These new CDC recommendations promise to change these trends by identifying individuals who may not realize that they are infected and thereby allow for earlier treatment. New treatments for Hepatitis C are more effective than ever in curing the infection, and may halt progression to cirrhosis, liver failure, liver cancer and death.”

The American College of Gastroenterology, with its more than 12,000 physician specialists in digestive health, is committed to advancing awareness of Hepatitis C and improving rates of treatment in the United States. Gastroenterologists treat patients with liver disease, and, along with their liver specialist colleagues in hepatology, are on the front line treating patients with chronic viral Hepatitis C.

The American College of Gastroenterology offers patient information on Hepatitis C infection through its web site www.gi.org and provides a free online service to locate GI specialists with an interest in liver disease at <http://patients.gi.org/find-a-liver-expert/>

Experts Available for Media Interviews

The American College of Gastroenterology can provide physician experts to comment on Hepatitis C screening, diagnosis and treatment by contacting [mediaonly\[at\]gi.org](mailto:mediaonly[at]gi.org).

About Hepatitis C

In the United States, Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is the most common chronic blood-borne infection, the most common cause of chronic liver disease contributing to progressive liver fibrosis, cirrhosis and liver cancer, and is the most frequent cause for liver transplantation. Hepatitis C is spread primarily by contact with blood and blood products. The use of injection illicit drugs is the most common mode of disease transmission including those people who injected illicit drugs only one time many years ago.

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People who received blood transfusions, transfusion of blood products or organ donations prior to 1992, when sensitive tests for HCV were introduced for blood screening, are at risk for hepatitis C infection, as are persons who received clotting factors prior to 1987. Other persons at risk for hepatitis C include long-term kidney dialysis patients, people with tattoos and body piercing other than pierced ears, health care workers after exposures (i.e., needle stick or splashes to the eye) from the blood of an infected person while on the job, infants born to HCV-infected mothers, people with high-risk sexual behavior, multiple partners and sexually transmitted diseases, people who snort cocaine using shared equipment, and people who have shared toothbrushes, razors and other personal items with a family member who is HCV-infected.

Resources for Consumers

ACG – American College of Gastroenterology “[Commonly Asked Questions about Chronic Hepatitis C](#)”

CDC - Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [Patient Education Fact Sheets English and Spanish](#)

CDC – Fact Sheet on Hepatitis C Testing Recommendations 2012

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/docs/HCV-TestingFactSheetNoEmbargo508.pdf>

NIDDK - National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive & Kidney Diseases, “[What I need to know about Hepatitis C](#)”

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