



VIRAL HEPATITIS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Infectious Disease Prevention and Health Services
Prevention and Health Promotion Administration
Center for Viral Hepatitis



May is the National Hepatitis Awareness Month.

Viral hepatitis is a contagious viral infection that attacks the liver. Many people have viral hepatitis infection but are not aware. Early diagnosis of hepatitis infections can protect the liver and prevent the development of liver cancer and the consequent need for liver transplantation.

May is designated Hepatitis Awareness Month in the United States, and May 19th is Hepatitis Testing Day. During May, the hepatitis program partners work to shed light on the impact of these hidden epidemics by raising awareness of viral hepatitis while encouraging testing and vaccination. Hepatitis Awareness Month activities help to improve everyone's understanding of viral hepatitis transmission and risk factors and to decrease the social stigma against viral hepatitis.

As part of the activities for 2024 Hepatitis Awareness Month, the Center for Viral Hepatitis at the Infectious Disease Prevention and Health Services Bureau of the Maryland Department will host a virtual Lunch and Learn webinar on May 24, 2024, from 12:00 to 1:30 PM. You can join the webinar [here](#).

Hepatitis awareness and testing events will be held in all local health departments' clinics throughout May. Walk-ins are welcome. Contact Odetta.dodson@maryland.gov for more information.

Maryland Hepatitis C Provider Survey



In 2023, the Center for Viral Hepatitis surveyed providers who test for and treat hepatitis C. Most providers surveyed could not treat individuals diagnosed with chronic hepatitis C in their facility. This indicates a need for enhanced efforts for case management and linkage to care and support services, especially in high-impact settings such as behavioral health and correctional settings. Read more about the key findings of the hepatitis C provider survey [here](#).

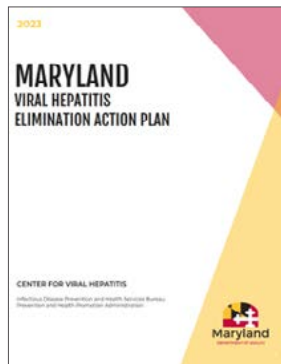
Viral Hepatitis in Maryland

After a significant outbreak of hepatitis A, which reached its peak in late 2020, Maryland’s successful vaccination campaign led to a return to baseline rates of hep A cases, with less than 1 case per 100,000 population. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of hepatitis A vaccination as a preventive measure.

Hepatitis B, a vaccine-preventable disease, continues to be prevalent in Maryland. Most healthy adults with acute HBV infection do not experience symptoms or complications. However, chronic HBV infections occur when an acute infection is not cleared by the immune system and can lead to serious liver complications over time. In 2022, 1,479 cases of chronic hepatitis B were reported in Maryland, representing a rate of 24 cases/100,000 population. Hepatitis B disproportionately impacts Asian Pacific Islanders and African immigrants.

Although there has been a consistent decline in the number of reported cases, chronic hepatitis C places a significant burden on public health in Maryland, with 2,840 cases reported through the surveillance system in 2022. Most acute cases are asymptomatic and reported among young persons who inject drugs.

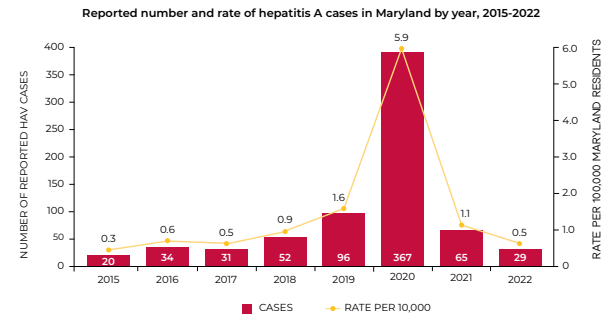
Review the [Maryland 2022 Viral Hepatitis Epidemiological Summary](#) for more information.



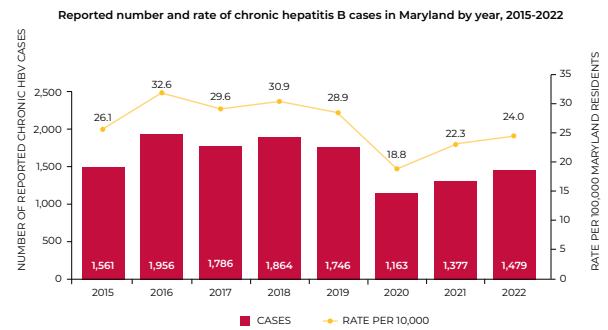
Maryland Viral Hepatitis Elimination Action Plan

The Center for Viral Hepatitis engaged with several partners, including the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition, to transform the [Maryland Viral Hepatitis Elimination Plan Framework](#) into an action plan. The Maryland Viral Hepatitis Elimination Action Plan describes the goals, strategic objectives, activities, and performance measures to prevent new viral hepatitis, provide early intervention, including diagnosis and treatment, and foster stakeholder partnership. You can access the Maryland Viral Hepatitis Elimination Action Plan [here](#).

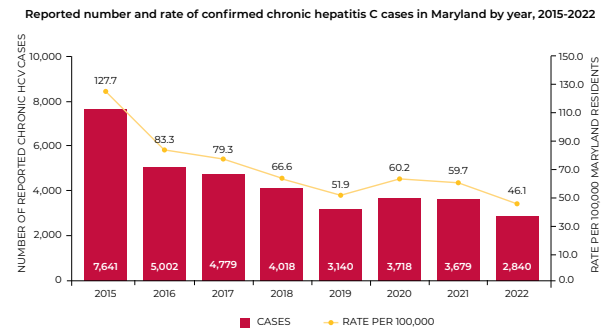
HEPATITIS A



HEPATITIS B



HEPATITIS C



Perinatal Hepatitis C Prevention

To address the increasing threat of mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis C, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention made crucial updates to its hepatitis C screening recommendations. Guidelines for hepatitis C screening in pregnancy were updated to recommend screening for all pregnant persons during each pregnancy. This change in guidelines reflects the changing epidemiology of hepatitis C in the United States, particularly the increasing infection rates among young persons, including people of reproductive age. As more people within this age range are becoming infected with hepatitis C, concerns for perinatal transmission are growing. Read more on [CDC Recommendations for Hepatitis C Screening Among Adults, United States, 2020](#).

In 2023, the CDC updated testing guidelines for infants born to people with hepatitis C infection. Rather than waiting to test for hepatitis C antibodies at 18 months, at which time maternal antibodies will no longer interfere with results, the CDC now recommends testing infants at 2-6 months of age using nucleic acid testing (NAT), which is not impacted by maternal antibodies and can therefore accurately indicate a child's hepatitis C status at a much earlier age. It is hoped that this change in guidelines will reduce the likelihood of infants being lost to follow-up before their hepatitis C status is determined, and more cases of perinatally acquired hepatitis C will be detected. Read more on [CDC Recommendations for Hepatitis C Testing Among Perinatally Exposed Infants and Children- United States, 2023](#).



Community Outreach Testing and Prevention Education

Since May 2023, the Center for Viral Hepatitis (CVH) has hosted bi-monthly community outreach testing events outside the Maryland Department of Health's office at

1223 W. Pratt Street in Baltimore in collaboration with the Hepatitis B Initiative (HBI) and Baltimore City Health Department.

The great success of the event and the relatively high positivity rate in the community led to a decision to continue to conduct outreach events at that location, including the provision of other outreach services, including STI prevention education, wound care, and health insurance navigation services. CVH received positive feedback from the community, including an individual who was put on a liver transplant list after learning about her hepatitis C status during the outreach.

Scan this QR Code for a list of [Free Hepatitis C Testing Locations in Maryland](#).



Community Outreach Testing Events

Community outreach testing events will be held at the MDH office at 1223 West Pratt, Baltimore, on the following dates from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.



May 15, 2024
May 29, 2024
June 19, 2024
August 21, 2024
October 16, 2024
December 18, 2024
February 19, 2025
April 16, 2025

Hepatitis C Provider Education Program



In collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, the Division of Infectious Diseases, the Center for Viral Hepatitis coordinates a viral hepatitis provider education program tagged “ Sharing The Cure” to address critical patient, provider, and structural barriers in the hepatitis C care continuum, including low rates of linkage to specialty care, primary care provider hepatitis C knowledge deficits, limited accessibility of hepatitis C care locations, and an insufficient number of providers to treat hepatitis C infection. Expected outcomes included increased primary care, HIV, and substance use provider capacity to diagnose and cure hepatitis C infection. You can read more about [Sharing The Cure](#).

Viral Hepatitis Education Materials

The following viral hepatitis education materials are available to educate and promote hepatitis A and B vaccination among Marylanders in English and Spanish. Although there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, it is preventable through behavior change, treatable with simple medications, and a cure is possible.

| Condition | Vaccine to Prevent | Treatment | Cure |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Hepatitis A | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Hepatitis B | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Hepatitis C | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |

Scan the code to find Viral Hepatitis testing and vaccination sites near you



| Condition | Vaccine to Prevent | Treatment | Cure |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Hepatitis B | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |

CDC GUIDELINES FOR HEP B TESTING:
Advise screening for all adults at least once in their lifetime.

Scan the code to find Viral Hepatitis testing and vaccination sites near you



| Condition | Vaccine to Prevent | Treatment | Cure |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Hepatitis C | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |

CDC GUIDELINES FOR HEP C TESTING:
At least once in a lifetime • All Adults Aged 18 Years and Older

Scan the code to find Viral Hepatitis testing and vaccination sites near you

