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## News Release

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John R. Kasich/ Governor  
Richard Hodges/ Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Office of Communications, 614.644.8562

## **May 19 is National Hepatitis Testing Day**

*Health Officials Recommend that Ohio “Baby Boomers” Get Tested*

COLUMBUS – In observance of national Hepatitis Awareness Month in May and Hepatitis Testing Day on May 19, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) urges all Ohio “baby boomers” (born between 1946 and 1964) to get tested for hepatitis C. In addition, some individuals are recommended to be tested for hepatitis B, including anyone born in Asia or the Pacific Islands (except Australia and New Zealand), anyone whose parents were born in most parts of Asia or the Pacific Islands, and anyone who lives with someone who has hepatitis B. An estimated 3.5 million to 5.3 million Americans are living with hepatitis B or hepatitis C. Up to 75 percent of people living with hepatitis C do not know they are infected and two in three Asian-Americans with hepatitis B don’t know they are infected.

Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood, semen, or another body fluid from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sexual contact with an infected person or sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment. Hepatitis B can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person infected with the hepatitis C virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. Today, most people become infected with the hepatitis C virus by sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Before 1992, when widespread screening of the blood supply began in the United States, hepatitis C was also commonly spread through blood transfusions and organ transplants. Hepatitis B and C are not spread by casual contact, kissing, hugging, sneezing, coughing, breastfeeding or sharing food.

“People with hepatitis often have no symptoms and can live with the infection for decades without feeling sick,” said ODH Medical Director Mary DiOrio, M.D. “Through testing, individuals can learn whether they are infected with hepatitis, and if they are, seek treatment which can vastly improve their health outcomes.”

If left untreated hepatitis B and hepatitis C can lead to serious liver problems, including liver cancer. Hepatitis B and C together represent the primary cause of chronic liver disease and liver cancer. For more information about hepatitis, visit the ODH website at [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov), or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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