



HEPATITIS C TESTING INITIATIVE, OCTOBER 2005

ABOUT PHICAS:

PHICAS is a collaborative project of the Piedmont HIV Health Care Consortium, Duke University Health Inequalities Program, Duke University Medical Center Infectious Disease Clinic, Duke Addictions Program, Durham County Health Department, Lincoln Community Health Center, Partners In Caring, and Person County Health Department.

PHICAS' mission is to increase access to quality, integrated health care services for people impacted by HIV and Hepatitis C, by education and partnerships with affected individuals, service providers, and the community at large. It is a three-year federally-funded public health program.

ABOUT HEPATITIS C:

About 4 million people in the U.S. have Hepatitis C. It is caused by a virus, damages the liver and is now the leading cause of liver transplants.

Hepatitis C is transmitted from blood to blood. Current intravenous drug users or those who have ever used drugs are most at risk. There is also a risk from non-sterilized equipment used for tattoos or piercings. Sexual transmission when blood is present has been identified as a minimal risk.

Hepatitis C can go undetected for years, until liver damage causes severe health problems. Those at a perceived risk are encouraged to get tested.

There is no immunization for Hep C, as there is for Hepatitis A and B, but, it can be treated, which is why testing is important.

ABOUT HEPATITIS C AND HIV:

Hep C is the most common co-infection in people with HIV.

Liver disease is now a leading cause of hospitalization and death for people with HIV/AIDS. The viruses accelerate each other, making you sicker. Both viruses are harder to treat when co-infected. If you're being treated, your treatment might not be effective. HIV can make you ineligible for a liver transplant in some states across the country.

ABOUT HEP C TESTING

A blood test is done by a medical professional. It is not part of most routine screening, so it should be requested if you feel you are at risk.

Regardless of your perceived risk, ask your healthcare professional about testing. Request testing if you: have ever injected illegal drugs, have HIV, are at risk for HIV, received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992, or believe you might have been exposed by receiving a tattoo or piercing.