

County of Moore
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cases of Acute Hepatitis B on the Rise in Moore County So Far in 2015

Moore County Health Department has identified a significant increase in the number of confirmed acute hepatitis B cases among young adults in Moore County since the beginning of 2015.

In 2014, Moore County had 2 confirmed cases of acute hepatitis B during the entire year. In just the first 5 months of 2015, there have been 5 confirmed cases, two of which were co-infected with hepatitis C.

The current cases are primarily among young adults injecting prescription drugs, particularly Opana or other opiate medications. The presumed mode of transmission is either directly sharing needles, or sharing the “cooked” Opana or other opiate with multiple people dipping their needles into a spoon containing the liquid to be injected.

“The Moore County Health Department investigates each reported case of hepatitis B in an attempt to identify close contacts, whether they are through needle-sharing, sexual intercourse, or household contacts”, said Kim Duffy, Communicable Disease Nurse for the Moore County Health Department. “Each case and their contacts are offered confidential testing, counseling and education about this highly contagious virus and what they can do to stop the further spread of the disease.”

Hepatitis B is a viral illness. It can cause yellowing of the skin and eyes, dark urine, fatigue, and fever. In some cases, the infection can persist, causing liver failure and even death. In the United States, hepatitis B is spread predominantly through intravenous (IV) drug use and sexual

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intercourse. In 2013 the Center for Disease Control estimated there were a total of 19,000 cases of hepatitis B in the U.S.

“Hepatitis B is preventable with vaccination. Since 1991, all children have been advised to receive the 3 shot series for hepatitis B. Anyone using IV drugs should be tested for immunity to hepatitis B and if they are not immune, they should be vaccinated”, said Dr. Eric Frizzell of the Pinehurst Medical Clinic.

The CDC also recommends vaccination for anyone who is not already immune and has more than one sexual partner every six months, men who have sex with men, and adults with diabetes age 19-60. Healthcare workers, patients on dialysis, and anyone who lives with someone with hepatitis B should also be vaccinated.

For more information, visit the Moore County Health Department website at www.moorecountync.gov/health or contact the Moore County Health Department’s Communicable Disease Nurse, Kim Duffy, at 910-947-4526.

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