



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

May 19, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maggie Hall, Public Information Director
Pinellas County Health Department
727-824-6908 (media only)

R U HIP TO HEP?
Hepatitis Screenings and Education on May 22 in St. Petersburg

One in 12 people worldwide have viral hepatitis B or C. In 2009, more than 1,380 people in Pinellas County tested positive for hepatitis C. The Pinellas County Health Department will be working with other community organizations to increase hepatitis awareness on the weekend after World Hepatitis Day, which is marked globally on May 19.

On Saturday, May 22, **R U Hip to Hep?**, a free event offering education and free testing for hepatitis B and HIV, will be held at the Sanderlin Center, 2335 22nd Ave. S., St. Petersburg. Event hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will include health presentations, giveaways, screenings and entertainment. Families are encouraged to attend.

Hepatitis A, B and C are viral infections that affect the liver. If left untreated and unmanaged, hepatitis B or C can lead to advanced liver scarring (cirrhosis) and other complications, including liver cancer or liver failure. Every year 1.5 million people die from either hepatitis B or C. Pinellas County residents at risk of viral hepatitis have access to hepatitis A and B vaccine through the Pinellas County Health Department's Hepatitis Program.

The Florida Department of Health has a comprehensive, statewide Hepatitis Prevention Program that observes its tenth year as a stand-alone program in 2010. In the past decade, the Florida Hepatitis Prevention Program has administered 332,927 doses of vaccine at no cost to at-risk adults in the State of Florida. This includes 3,317 doses given to citizens of Pinellas County. For information, go to <http://pinellashealth.com/Hepatitis.asp> or call (727) 824-6932.