



# NEWS RELEASE



## **For Immediate Release**

For information contact: Shawna Rhine, Community Outreach Coordinator/Public Information Officer  
Southern 7 Health Department & Head Start

Office: 618-626-2355 Cell: 618-614-9223 Southern 7 Central Office: 618-634-2297 Email: [srhine@s7hd.org](mailto:srhine@s7hd.org)

---

### **(11/21/24) Southern 7 Continues Focus of Hepatitis B Prevention in the Region**

An estimated 1.4 million Americans are affected by Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), the virus that can cause serious liver disease and can eventually lead to liver cancer without proper treatment. Southern 7 Health Department (S7HD), together with other Illinois healthcare providers, continues to raise awareness about HBV, and encourage the public to get screened and vaccinated.

In October 2024, Southern 7 renewed funding from the Center for Asian Health Equity (CAHE) at the University of Chicago Medicine and the Hope Light Foundation (HLF) to reach and engage community members and residents around HBV prevention. This is the fifth year the Health Department has received this funding, which will be utilized to disseminate HBV prevention information for the public and high-risk populations through area agencies, healthcare facilities, schools, and other community partners.

“As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, screening and routine HBV vaccination rates dropped significantly nationwide, but through extensive education post-COVID, rates are going back up,” said Shawna Rhine, S7HD Community Outreach Coordinator. “It’s through continued HBV knowledge and ensuring timely vaccination that we can reduce the prevalence of Hepatitis B and eventually eliminate this disease.”

The most common way HBV is spread is from mother to baby during birth, therefore, pregnant women should be tested for the virus. Other high-risk populations include individuals who use or formerly used injection drugs, those born or whose parents were born in high endemic countries, such as most Asian and African countries, and men who have sex with men. Screening is done through a simple blood test.

Most people with HBV do not feel sick and may not present with any symptoms until severe liver damage leads to liver cancer. Approximately 1 in 4 individuals untreated will eventually die from HBV-related health conditions. Although there is no cure, individuals with HBV can live a full and normal life with a treatment plan and routine care.

The HBV vaccine is highly effective in preventing the disease. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends vaccination for everyone under the age of 60. The HBV vaccine requires multiple doses for full protection. For example, the 3-dose HBV vaccine requires doses at 0, 1, and 6 months. Southern 7 Health Department provides the HBV vaccine to children and adults.

For more information on preventing Hepatitis B, or to schedule an HBV vaccine appointment, contact Southern 7 Health Department at 618-634-2297, download the Southern 7 App, or visit [www.southern7.org](http://www.southern7.org).

###

Follow Southern 7 on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, Southern 7 Podcast, Southern 7 app, and at [www.southern7.org](http://www.southern7.org)