



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **London Drugs Launches Potentially Life-Saving Hepatitis C Screening at Pharmacies**

*BC has one of the highest number of new cases per year in Canada, more than 80,000 believed to be infected but many more unaware*

**September 7, 2018, Vancouver, BC** – An innovative and potentially life-saving hepatitis C screening program has launched at five London Drugs locations in the Lower Mainland.

Patients can now undertake a simple finger prick test at the pharmacy to check if they have been exposed to hepatitis C virus (HCV) at some point in the past. The test, called the OraQuick HCV rapid antibody test, is more than 99% accurate at detecting HCV antibodies and provides results in 20 minutes.

In cases of a positive result, pharmacists refer patients to their family doctor for a diagnostic lab test. Pharmacists provide initial counselling regarding the potential diagnosis and education about the ability to cure HCV.

“It is critically important to screen those at risk so we can treat hepatitis C early. Early diagnosis can help patients avoid potentially serious liver disease, including liver failure, cirrhosis and liver cancer. The purpose of our screening program is to help make the test easily accessible to those at risk so more people can receive an early diagnosis,” says Allen Wu, Pharmacy Manager at London Drugs.

The program launches on the heels of new testing guidelines published by the Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver recommending that all Canadians born between 1945 and 1975 get tested for the potentially liver-destroying virus.

“Over 75 per cent of people living with hepatitis C in British Columbia were born between 1945 and 1975. We need to raise awareness about the importance of getting tested and increase access to screening - particularly for this age group - so that we can start to treat affected individuals early,” says Dr. Alnoor Ramji, a Hepatitis C specialist and Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at UBC.

There are approximately 80,000 British Columbians believed to be infected with hepatitis C and the province has one of the highest rates of new cases per year in Canada. Many are unaware they harbour the blood-borne virus because it can take decades before symptoms become evident.

“Hepatitis C is a silent epidemic partly because most people do not know if they are infected but also because the stigma of the disease has created barriers to diagnosis and treatment,” says Patient Advocate with the Pacific Hepatitis C Network, Daryl Luster, who had undiagnosed symptoms for years as a result of the liver-damaging virus and is now cured.

“Expanding access to screening through pharmacies will help improve access to treatment and curative therapy, and erode the stigma associated with the disease. B.C. is set to be a leader in the elimination of hepatitis C,” adds Luster.



Hepatitis C screening is available at the following London Drugs locations. Patients can call or visit the pharmacy to book an appointment. The cost of the test is \$24.

[Peninsula Village Mall](#)

15355 - 24th Avenue  
South Surrey, British  
Columbia V4A 2H9

Pharmacy: (604) 535-3281

[Park Royal North](#)

875 Park Royal North  
West Vancouver, British  
Columbia V7T 1H9

Pharmacy: (604) 926-9616

[Kerrisdale](#)

2091 W 42nd Avenue  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6M 2B4

Pharmacy: (604) 263-1811

[West Broadway](#)

525 West Broadway  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V5Z 1E6

Pharmacy: (604) 872-5177

[Granville & Georgia](#)

710 Granville St.  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6Z 1E4

Pharmacy: (604) 685-5292

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### **About London Drugs**

Founded in 1945, B.C.-based London Drugs has 81 stores in more than 35 major markets throughout British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba including its online store [www.LondonDrugs.com](http://www.LondonDrugs.com). London Drugs offers consumers a range of products from digital cameras and cosmetics to computers and televisions. Renowned for its creative approach to retailing, the company employs more than 7,500 people with pharmacy and health care services being the heart of its business. Committed to innovation and superior customer service, London Drugs has established itself as a reputable and caring company and continues to position itself for future growth and development.

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