



**British Columbians urged to get screened for hepatitis C
as the province has one of the highest rates of new cases per year in Canada**

***Awareness campaign leading up to World Hepatitis Day on July 28th
aims to increase awareness about the need for screening and reduce the stigma***

July 18, 2019 – Nine in ten people living with viral hepatitis are unaware that they have the life-threatening infection¹ because it can take decades before symptoms become evident. British Columbia has one of the highest rates of new cases per year in Canada and there are approximately 80,000 in the province believed to be infected with hepatitis C.²

“Unless screening, diagnosis and linkage to care is massively expanded, more British Columbians will become infected and lives will be needlessly lost because of this curable disease,” says John Wong, Pharmacy Manager at London Drugs.

In an effort to improve access to testing and treatment for the potentially liver-destroying virus, and reduce the stigma associated with the blood-borne illness, London Drugs is hosting hepatitis C screening events at nine London Drugs locations in the Lower Mainland. Hepatitis C Educators will also be at London Drugs locations leading up to World Hepatitis Day on July 28th to further increase awareness about the need for screening. These specially trained pharmacists will be offering expert advice and encouraging testing, particularly among higher risk populations.

New testing guidelines recommend that all Canadians born between 1945 and 1975 get screened. There is an elevated risk among that age group due to inferior infection prevention and control practices and blood products that went unscreened prior to 1992.

“Over 75 per cent of people living with hepatitis C in British Columbia are Boomers born between 1945 and 1975. For this group, testing should be as common as getting a blood pressure check or a cholesterol check,” says Dr. Alnoor Ramji, a Hepatitis C specialist and Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at UBC.

Experts have recently suggested that pregnant women in the province get tested as well. There is also higher incidence of hepatitis C among certain populations of immigrants who come to British Columbia from regions where precautions meant to prevent the transmission of blood-borne infections are not as rigorous. [According to data compiled by BC Centre for Disease Control](#)³, incidences of Hepatitis C in BC are highest in immigrants from Vietnam (6.1%), Pakistan (4.8%), Taiwan (4.4%), Philippines (3.6%), China (3.2%), and India (2.75%).

“Making screening easy and accessible within those communities locally is critical to getting more high risk individuals tested so that we can start to treat affected individuals early,” says Wong.

Anyone can now be screened for hepatitis C with the simple finger prick test at 11 London Drugs locations throughout the Lower Mainland and in Nanaimo. The test, called the OraQuick HCV rapid antibody test, is more than 99% accurate at detecting HCV antibodies and provides results in 20 minutes. The cost of the test is \$24.

¹ <http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/news/jun-2019/world-hepatitis-alliance-supports-efforts-increase-diagnosis-viral-hepatitis>

² BC Centre for Disease Control

³ Based on published “2013: HCV Rates” data by Statistics Canada

In the case of a positive antibody result, pharmacists will notify the patient's family physician so that a confirmatory blood test can be ordered. In the case of a positive result, the patient is referred to a specialist for further evaluation and treatment. Pharmacists provide education about the curative therapies available and support patients throughout their journey through treatment to cure. The treatment is relatively simple; it involves taking antiviral medications daily for eight to 12 weeks. Current therapies can cure over 95% of people with Hepatitis C.

"There is a lot of misinformation about hepatitis C. Eroding the stigma and educating people about the disease is critical to increasing testing rates," says Wong..

Hepatitis C Educators will be at the following London Drugs locations leading up to World Hepatitis Day on July 28th to provide information and screening. Patients interested in being tested can call the pharmacy to book an appointment.

Hepatitis C testing is always available by appointment at specific London Drugs locations. A complete list of locations and information about booking can be found www.londondrugs.com/hepatitis.

Lower Mainland

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| Monday, July 22 11am – 7pm | Trenant Park Mall: 5237 48th Ave, Delta Peninsula Village Mall: 100 – 15355 24th Ave, Surrey | (604) 946-5642 (604) 535-3281 |
| Tuesday, July 23 11am – 7pm | 875 Park Royal North, West Vancouver Kerrisdale, 2091 W 42 nd Ave, Vancouver | (604) 926-9616 (604) 263-1811 |
| Wednesday, July 24 11am – 7pm | Scott 72 Mall, 7303 120 th St., Delta 525 West Broadway, Vancouver | (604) 591-9544 (604) 872-5177 |
| Thursday, July 25 11am – 7pm | Ironwood Plaza, 11666 Steveston Hwy, Richmond | (604) 448-5468 |
| Friday, July 26 11am – 7pm | Granville & Georgia: 710 Granville St, Vancouver | (604) 685-5292 |
| Saturday, July 27 11am – 7pm | West Broadway: 525 West Broadway, Vancouver | (604) 872-5177 |
| Sunday, July 28 11am – 7pm | 41st & Victoria: 5639 Victoria Dr, Vancouver | (604) 322-6050 |

Nanaimo

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| Thursday, July 25 11am – 2:30pm | Nanaimo North Town Centre: 175 – 4750 Rutherford Rd, Nanaimo | (250) 760-2031 |
| Thursday, July 25 3:30pm – 7pm | Port Place Shopping Centre: 2 – 650 South Terminal, Nanaimo | (250) 753-4433 |

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. 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.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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