

# LIVER DISEASE AND HEPATITIS PROGRAM

## WINTER 2022-23 NEWSLETTER

### ALASKANS KNOW HOW TO PREPARE FOR WINTER TO KEEP OURSELVES HEALTHY AND SAFE.

Everyone six months or older should get an annual flu shot. Flu shots are safe, effective and widely available. Getting your flu shot will help protect our health care system while COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities.

Get yours today at your local pharmacy, health care provider or drive-thru clinic. Find flu vaccine near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

People aged 5 and older are recommended to receive an updated bivalent COVID booster if they have completed a primary series and it has been at least two months since either their primary series or a booster dose.



### HEPATITIS C AND SIMPLIFIED TREATMENT

Simplified treatment for hepatitis C is available for adults who do not have cirrhosis and who have not previously received treatment. People living in small Alaska villages off the road system can even be treated for hepatitis C right in their communities. The treatments consist of 1-3 pills/day for 8 to 12 weeks. Liver Disease Program Providers connect with Health aides or local providers in the village clinics to see patients via telehealth. Treatment medications can be prescribed through the local tribal health organization and mailed to patients. Three months after completing treatment, a test is done to confirm that the hepatitis C is cured. Simplified treatment is a quick and effective way to treat hepatitis C without the time and cost it takes to travel to hubs or Anchorage.

# CURRENT RESEARCH

## Liver Cancer Disparities in Alaska Native/American Indian People (Li-CAD): Imaging Randomized Clinical Trial

Alaska Native and American Indian people have some of the highest rates of liver cancer in the U.S. We can take pictures inside the body and use blood tests to help diagnose liver cancer when it is small so there is a better chance for treatment and cure. This is called liver cancer screening.

We are participating in a joint study with the Cherokee Nation and the University of Washington to compare two different liver cancer screening tests. One test is abbreviated MRI (aMRI) and the other is liver ultrasound. Both are safe and painless imaging tests.

These two tests have never been compared in a large study. Our small study will help us design a larger study that will tell us if liver ultrasound or aMRI is better for liver cancer screening. Data from this small study may be combined in the future with data from a similar larger study.

Participants will be randomly assigned to either aMRI or ultrasound. Each participant will have an aMRI or ultrasound to look for liver cancer every six months. There will be a total of 3 imaging tests during this 1 year study.

Participants will also have a blood test to look for liver cancer every six months. The blood test is called alpha-fetoprotein (AFP). The AFP is a protein made by the liver that may increase with liver cancer. Patients at high risk for liver cancer should have an AFP test every six months for liver cancer screening.

Recruitment will run through next year. Talk to your liver disease provider if you would like to learn more about the study.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Hepatitis A vaccine immunogenicity 25 years after vaccination in Alaska

The hepatitis A virus (HAV) vaccine is recommended for all children 1 year of age and older. We have been following a group of Alaska Native people who were vaccinated as young children 25 years ago. We want to find out how long the HAV vaccine protection lasts. We found high levels of protection against HAV 25 years later. This means that boosters of the vaccine are not needed after the initial childhood vaccination series.

## CONTACT US:

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