Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver and is most often caused by a virus. In the US, the most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A (HAV), hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that upwards of 5.3 million nationwide are living with HBV or HCV and 65-75 percent are not aware of their infection. Because viral hepatitis can be asymptomatic for years, many people are not tested until they begin to show signs of liver disease, cirrhosis, liver failure or liver cancer. Viral hepatitis claims the lives of 15,000 people annually. Baby boomers, those born between 1945 and 1965, have the highest rates of HCV-related mortality.

Help Combat the Silent Epidemic

Viral Hepatitis Funding Needs

- A total of $35 million for CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis to expand the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator (VHPC) Program and viral hepatitis testing initiative and create a comprehensive education and surveillance system in line with the 2010 professional judgment budget and HHS Viral Hepatitis Action Plan.
- Funding must support HHS in strengthening the federal response to viral hepatitis in line with new CDC testing guidelines for baby boomers, the HHS Action Plan, IOM viral hepatitis report and CDC professional judgment budget.
- Funding at CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) for an Adult HBV Vaccination Initiative to overcome the greatest remaining challenge for hepatitis A and B prevention.
- Funding for Ryan White Program-funded clinics, community health centers (CHCs) and SAMHSA-funded programs to increase capacity to serve people with chronic viral hepatitis and integrate comprehensive services into settings that serve high-risk populations.
- Steady and predictable growth for the budget of the National Institutes of Health to ensure success of the objectives outlined by the Viral Hepatitis Action Plan.
- An end to the ban on the use of federal funds for syringe exchange programs to help prevent new viral hepatitis infections.

The Costs of Inaction

- HBV treatment: $2,000 - $16,000 per year, ~10% are cured
- HCV treatment: $30,000-$80,000, about 65-80% are cured
- The medical costs of HCV are expected to increase from $30 billion in 2009 to over $85 billion by 2024.