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## Bay Area Groups Launch Anti-Hepatitis B Campaign



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Reporting

*(CBS 5) SAN FRANCISCO* Thousands of people in the Bay Area have a time bomb ticking inside and don't even know it. That time bomb is Hepatitis B, but if it's caught early, it's treatable.

Up to 80 percent of those infected with Hepatitis B have no idea they're carrying the virus. An ambitious campaign aims to change that.

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease. While most patients recover, many will develop a chronic infection that can destroy the liver or cause liver cancer.

Dr. Terry Wright is a liver specialist at UCSF. She says many people underestimate the importance of their liver, saying, "you can't live without your liver. Your liver is essential for many functions in your body and turns things that can be poisonous in your body to being non-toxic."

On Thursday, representatives from more than 50 health care and Asian-American organizations launched a new major public health campaign against the liver disease -- the first in the nation.

Dr. Samuel So is a liver specialist at Stanford Medical Center. He explained the goal was "to test every Asian American for chronic Hepatitis B, for those not protected, to get them vaccinated and those who are chronically infected, to get them appropriate medical management."

The goal of the new two-year campaign is to get Hepatitis B infections under control.

Babies born in the United States are currently vaccinated against Hepatitis B. But many immigrants are not so fortunate. Hepatitis B is common in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands. Mothers can pass the virus to their babies in childbirth. One in 10 Asian Americans is infected. Most don't know it.

Gina Choi is a second-generation Korean-American and a third-year medical student. She knows an undetected infection can be tragic, saying, "It's such a devastating disease, and the hardest part is that it's completely preventable and if detected early enough, treatable."

Thirty-four percent of San Francisco's population is made up of Asian Pacific Islanders. There's good reason to get everyone screened.

The message about Hepatitis B is simple: "B sure, B tested and B free."

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