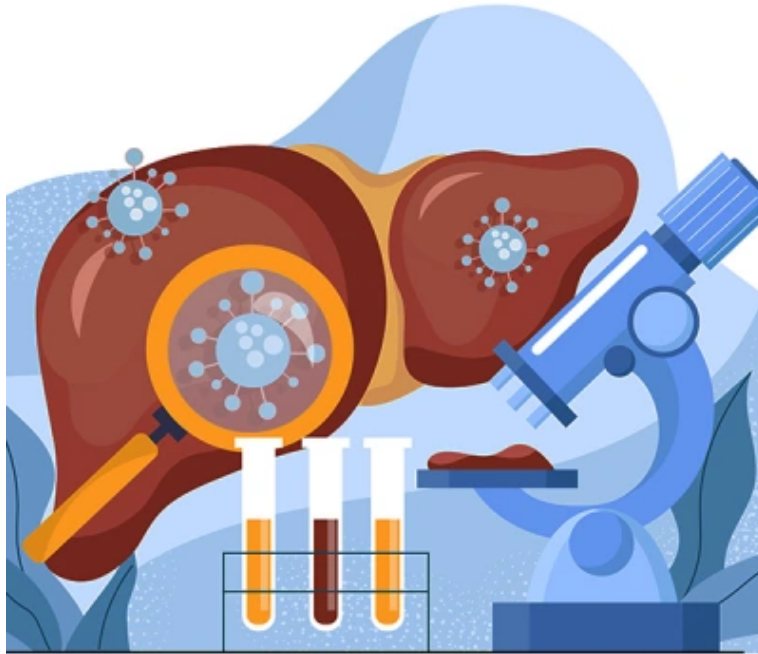


# NYU Langone Health Emergency Departments Successfully Expand Hepatitis Screening Program



**NYU Langone Health has not only complied with a 2024 mandate to offer hepatitis C screenings, but has gone a step further, providing hepatitis B tests as well.**

On May 3, 2024, the New York State Department of Health mandated that all hospitals begin offering patients screenings for the hepatitis C virus (HCV) at least once in their lifetime. The virus kills about 15,000 people a year in the United States, mainly from cirrhosis and liver cancer, and adults in their 20s and 30s make up more than one-third of newly reported HCV infections, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. HCV is curable in most cases with antiviral treatments.

NYU Langone Health not only complied with the mandate, offering HCV screenings to patients who enter its Emergency Departments (ED), but went a step further: The

ED staff began suggesting screenings for the hepatitis B virus (HBV) as well. HBV can also lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer, especially if left untreated. There is no cure for HBV, but medications can reduce the risk of serious complications.

Risk factors for HCV and HBV include contact with infected blood and/or bodily fluids. Public health authorities have estimated 241,000 New York City residents live with chronic HBV—and about 46 percent don't know they have it. A vaccine exists to prevent HBV infection, so spreading the word about the condition benefits patients. There is no vaccine for HCV.

Data shows that hepatitis rates, particularly HBV, are higher among immigrant populations in the US compared to native-born populations. "Many of our communities have among the highest rates of HCV and HBV in New York State," says [Ian Wittman, MD](#), chief of service of emergency medicine, NYU Langone Health—Brooklyn, the lead physician on the initiative. The rate of HBV infections in Brooklyn's Sunset Park area is 593.2 per 100,000, nine times that of New York City's 65.4 per 100,000. The Chinatown area of Manhattan has a rate of 232.4 per 100,000, four times the city's average. Outside of New York City, the Nassau County area of Long Island has the highest numbers of newly reported cases of HBV, with 39.4 per 100,000. By contrast, across the US, the rate is 5.9 cases per 100,000 people.

All of NYU Langone's EDs began offering both HCV and HBV screenings last summer. NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn benefited from the partnership of [Sandeep Bhat, MD, MBA](#), HIV network medical director at the Family Health Centers at NYU Langone. The FHCs have offered HBV screenings for Brooklyn patients for many years, and in 2024 began offering a sexual wellness survey that has identified more patients at risk for HBV.

By the end of 2024, 5 to 15 percent of patients treated in EDs across the institution agreed to be screened for both viruses. NYU Langone offers screenings to all patients, despite insurance status.

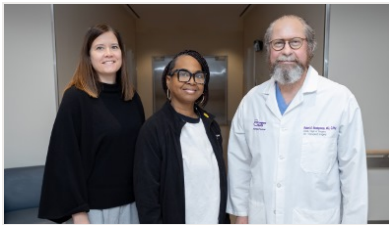
"Over the latter months of 2024, we optimized the process, encouraging our providers in the EDs, 'If you're ordering labs, you should consider also ordering this,'" says Dr. Wittman. "It's similar to NYU Langone's successful long-term implementation of diabetes screenings."

With thousands of patients screened for HBV and HCV since the program's start, the team is excited to see the initiative expand through 2025. "The earlier the virus is recognized, the easier it is to treat," says Harita Reddy, MPH, BSN, regional director for emergency medicine at NYU Langone Health. "Since HBV can go undetected for

many years, a lot of patients only learn they have it when they experience symptoms, such as fatigue, fever, joint pain, and jaundice, or, in the worst cases, liver failure.”

“Every patient who gets a positive HBV or HCV result through this screening system,” Dr. Wittman says, “that’s somebody whose life has potentially been transformed.”

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