

HIV & Hep C Coinfection



WHAT IS HIV/HEP C COINFECTION?

A person who has human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) has HIV/HCV coinfection, meaning they are infected with both viruses. Persons who inject drugs and men who have sex with men are at the greatest risk for coinfection.

IS THERE A VACCINATION?

There is no vaccination for HIV or HCV, but effective treatment exists for both.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW IF I AM COINFLICTED?

HIV can make the symptoms of HCV worse. Untreated HCV can result in severe liver scarring (cirrhosis), cancer and can be life-threatening. Often, people who are coinfecting have no symptoms and do not know they are sick. It is recommended for everyone to be tested at least once in their lifetime for HIV and HCV. Those at an increased risk should consider being tested more often.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HCV?

It is important to know that sometimes people who have HCV have no symptoms and do not know they are sick. Those that do experience symptoms may have:

- Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Bruising and bleeding easily
- Fatigue
- Dark-colored urine
- Swelling in the legs
- Confusion, drowsiness and slurred speech (hepatic encephalopathy)
- Loss of appetite



WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Some cases of HCV resolve spontaneously. Others last for years and require treatment with antivirals. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent liver scarring and cancer. If you think you have been exposed, contact your primary health care provider or your nearest emergency room as soon as possible.

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK OF COINFECTION?

- Do not share needles or other drug injection equipment.
- Use properly sterilized equipment for tattoos or body piercings.
- Limit sharing of personal care items (razors, nail clippers, etc.).
- Practice safer sex, using condoms (PrEP and PEP, taken to prevent HIV, *Do Not* prevent Hep C).
- Follow recommended safety measures if you are exposed to blood or needle sticks at work.
- Wear gloves if you must be in contact with blood.

RESOURCES:

- Hepatitis C: FAQ's, Statistics, Resources, Find Treatment, etc...
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-c/>
- HCV/HIV Coinfection:
 - <https://npin.cdc.gov/publication/hcvhiv-coinfection>
- Hepatitis C - Symptoms and causes
 - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hepatitis-c/symptoms-causes/syc-20354278>

