

HIV and Hepatitis C Co-infection



Healthy Living Tips

- **Respect Your Body**
Eat healthy food, drink plenty of water, and get restful sleep. Try to exercise daily.
- **Practice Safe Sex**
Use condoms or other latex barriers all the time. Avoid sexual activities that might cause bleeding.
- **Get Help And Find Support**
Drugs and alcohol can make your illness worse. If you can't stop, get help. Your healthcare provider can help you find support groups for people who have HIV and hepatitis C.
- **Follow Advice And Stay Informed**
Follow instructions, try to keep all your appointments. Get the facts from your healthcare provider.

What Is HIV/Hepatitis C Coinfection?

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus that attacks your immune system. It is the virus that causes AIDS. Hepatitis C is an infection that damages your liver. It is caused by a virus called the Hepatitis C virus, or HCV for short. Co-infection is a medical term meaning that you have two or more infections in your body at the same time. If you have HIV and hepatitis C co-infection, then you have both the HIV and hepatitis C viruses. These two illnesses are very different, so it is important that you learn about both of them.

What Do I Need To Know About HIV?

HIV is passed from person to person mainly through sex and through contact with infected blood. You can have HIV and have no symptoms for a long time. Over time, however, the virus wears down your body's immune system, making it hard for your body to fight off dangerous infections and certain cancers. While there is no cure for HIV, there are excellent treatments that can control HIV and help you live a long and healthy life. You will want to learn much more about it, so you can do everything possible to stay healthy, and avoid passing HIV to others.

What Do I Need To Know About Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is mainly passed from person to person through contact with infected blood; it can also be passed through sex. The symptoms of hepatitis C infection are often very mild. Some people with hepatitis C feel tired or have an upset stomach. Others may not have any symptoms at all. Even if you do not have any symptoms, hepatitis C is a serious illness. Over time, if untreated, it can cause other health problems, such as cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. With proper treatment, most people can be cured of hepatitis C.

Can Having HIV Make Hepatitis C Worse?

Yes. HIV affects your body's ability to fight off hepatitis C. As a result, you might develop a worse case of hepatitis C than someone who doesn't have HIV.

What Do I Need To Know About HIV, Hepatitis C And Sex?

Both infections can be passed to another person through sex, though HIV is more easily transmitted this way. For people with HIV, the best ways to keep sex partners from getting HIV are by both taking your medications as prescribed and using condoms correctly and consistently. People with hepatitis C should use condoms or other latex barriers all the time, and avoid "rough sex" or other activities that might cause bleeding.



**CONNECTICUT
Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)

860.793.9813 (fax)

www.ctclearinghouse.org

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

What Do I Need To Know About HIV, Hepatitis C, And Drug Use?

Sharing needles, syringes, or any equipment used to inject drugs is one of the most common ways that HIV and hepatitis C is spread. By sharing needles or works, you can even spread both of these viruses at the same time. The best thing to do, especially if you have HIV or hepatitis C, is to not use drugs. If you use drugs, make sure that your needles and injecting equipment are clean (or brand new) every time and never share them with anyone else. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting treatment.

Is There A Cure For Hepatitis C?

Yes, there are safe and effective treatments that can cure hepatitis C. Having HIV will not decrease your chance of being cured of hepatitis C.

What Can I Do To Slow Down My HIV And Hepatitis C Co-infections?

The best way to keep your co-infection from becoming a serious health problem is to keep yourself and your liver healthy by following these guidelines:

Speak With Your Provider About Treatment For HIV And Treatment For Hepatitis C.

Controlling HIV and curing hepatitis C are both extremely important, and will help to keep your liver healthy.

Do Not Drink Alcohol.

Alcohol weakens your immune system and damages your liver even when you are healthy. When you have HIV and hepatitis C co-infection, drinking even small amounts of alcohol, can worsen the damage to your liver. It doesn't help to switch from "hard" liquor to beer, cider, or wine. Talk to your healthcare provider to get help to stop drinking alcohol.

Get Vaccinated Against Other Hepatitis Viruses.

Having hepatitis C does not mean that you can't get other kinds of hepatitis. You should be vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B, unless you already are immune. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting vaccinated (shots).

Avoid Taking Medicines, Supplements, Or Natural/Herbal Remedies That Might Cause More Damage To Your Liver.

Even ordinary pain relievers can cause liver problems in some people. Check with your healthcare provider before you take any natural or herbal remedy, supplement, prescription, or non-prescription medicine. Make sure your healthcare provider knows all the medicines you are taking for HIV and hepatitis C.

Will Having Hepatitis C Prevent Me From Getting Treated For HIV?

No. Both HIV and hepatitis C can be safely treated in coinfecting patients. The timing of therapy for both HIV and HCV will be determined by your HIV provider.

Will Having HIV Prevent Me From Getting Treated For Hepatitis C?

No. Hepatitis C can be safely treated in patients who have HIV. Your HIV provider will choose a regimen that is individualized for you because there are important drug interactions with some HIV medications.

Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/dmhas
24/7 Access Line
1-800-563-4086

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov
1-800-662-HELP(4357)

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/index.htm

