



## Facts At-A-Glance

- The hepatitis C virus (HCV) causes the liver to swell, and may cause scar tissue to build up and replace healthy liver tissue, preventing the liver from working well.
- The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system and causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).
- A person with hepatitis C and HIV has HCV/HIV coinfection (having two or more viruses).
- About one out of three people with HIV also have HCV.
- HCV and HIV are viruses that are transmitted blood-to-blood.
- People with HCV or HIV often have no symptoms.
- HCV is a leading cause of hospitalization and death for people with HIV.
- HCV/HIV coinfection can cause higher levels of HCV in the blood, faster progression of HCV, and an increased risk for cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver.
- People with HCV and HIV need to talk to their doctors to determine their treatment options.
- The only way to stop the spread of HCV and HIV is to avoid direct contact with infected blood.



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# HCV/HIV COINFECTION



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## Why is the liver important?

The liver is the second largest organ in your body and is located under your rib cage on the right side. It weighs about three pounds and is shaped like a football that is flat on one side.

The liver performs many jobs in your body. It processes what you eat and drink into energy and nutrients your body can use. The liver also removes harmful substances from your blood.

## What is hepatitis C (HCV)?

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV causes the liver to swell, and may cause scar tissue to build up and replace healthy liver tissue, preventing the liver from working well.

## What is the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)?

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system. HIV is the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

## What is HCV/HIV coinfection?

A person with hepatitis C and HIV has HCV/HIV coinfection (having two or more viruses). About one out of three people with HIV also have HCV.

## What is the relationship between HCV and HIV?

HCV and HIV are viruses that are transmitted blood-to-blood. People with HCV or HIV often have no symptoms. Since HCV and HIV can be transmitted through sharing infected needles, many drug users are coinfecting. Between 50% and 90% of HIV-infected injection drug users are also infected with HCV.

HCV is a leading cause of hospitalization and death for people with HIV. People with HIV need to talk to a doctor about HCV testing.

## Can HIV make HCV worse?

Yes. HCV/HIV coinfection can cause higher levels of HCV in the blood, faster progression of HCV, and an increased risk for cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver.

## Are women with HCV and HIV at great risk of transmitting HCV when giving birth?

Yes. The risk of transmitting HCV to newborns is about 17% in women with HCV and HIV compared to 4% risk in women with HCV only.

## What are treatment options for people who have HCV/HIV coinfection?

People with HCV and HIV need to talk to their doctors to determine their treatment options.

Doctors may recommend taking peginterferon and ribavirin to treat HCV. Peginterferon and ribavirin are not options or successful for everyone and can have serious side effects.

Other treatment related steps people with HCV and HIV can take:

- Avoid alcohol
- Talk to a doctor before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter, alternative, or herbal medicines, vitamins, and supplements
- Be vaccinated for hepatitis A and hepatitis B

## What are the side effects of HCV and HIV treatment medications?

When HCV and HIV medications are taken together, they can sometimes cause liver damage. HCV can cause HIV treatment medications to be more toxic to the liver. It is important for people with HCV and HIV to see their doctors regularly to be checked for possible side effects.

## What is the best way to stop the spread of HCV and HIV?

There are no vaccines to prevent HCV or HIV. The only way to stop the spread of HCV and HIV is to avoid direct contact with infected blood.

- Do not share needles
- Use clean needles and equipment for tattoos or body piercings
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, and other personal care items with others
- Practice safe sex
- Use recommended safety measures if you are exposed to blood or needle sticks at work
- Wear gloves if you have to touch someone's blood