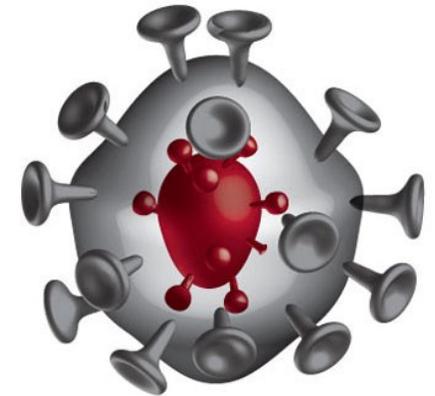
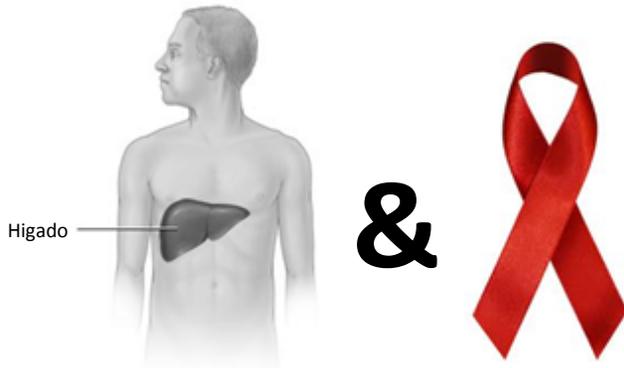


Are you HIV positive and newly diagnosed with hepatitis C (Hep C)?

Do you have one virus and think you might be infected with the other?



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What is HIV and Hep C co-infection?

When people have HIV and another major infection such as Hep C, they are “co-infected”, meaning they have more than one infection at a point in time. HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, killing the CD4+cells that help the body fight off infection. Hep C is a virus that attacks the liver, and can cause liver damage (cirrhosis), liver failure and liver cancer. You might also hear the Hep C virus referred to as HCV.

**Hepatitis C
and HIV
Co-Infection**

Hepatitis C and HIV Co-infection

Why is HIV and Hep C co-infection a problem?

Being infected with both HIV and Hep C is a problem because each one is very hard on your body. When you are co-infected, each disease makes the other one worse. You can get sicker faster, and it is hard to treat both diseases at the same time. HIV can cause the Hep C virus to reproduce more quickly. People who are co-infected can develop liver damage and liver cancer more quickly than people who have only Hep C. Having HIV makes Hep C harder to treat because the immune system is weaker. Having Hep C also makes HIV harder to treat. Many of the medications used to treat HIV are processed by the liver. A liver badly damaged by Hep C cannot process drugs as well. Although generally safe, the risk of side effects with HIV medications may be slightly higher.

What can I do to protect my health?

If you think you might have been infected with HIV or Hep C, get tested. All treatments work better when you are diagnosed early, before the viruses have time to damage your immune system and/or your liver.

If you are co-infected with HIV and Hep C, protecting your liver is important. It's a vital organ in your body. It processes vitamins and minerals and filters your blood. Protecting your immune system is important too. It helps you fight off disease and stay healthy.

If you are infected with HIV, Hep C or both, here are some ways you can protect your liver and your immune system:

- Eat healthy, nutritious food.
- Get lots of sleep and exercise. If you can't sleep for long periods, take naps.
- Avoid alcohol and street drugs. They can damage the liver.
- Drink lots of water.
- Quit or cut back on smoking.
- Get vaccinated to protect yourself from hepatitis A and B.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking any other drugs, including prescription and non-prescription medications, and complementary therapies. They may interact with your HIV or Hep C treatments.
- If you are considering herbs or supplements for your liver, talk to your doctor.
- Protect yourself from re-infection with HIV or Hep C.

What you need to know

If you have HIV, you should consider getting a hepatitis C test because effective management of both viruses improves your chances of protecting your health.

- Hepatitis C treatment can affect your HIV treatment. You and your doctor will decide on the best way to manage both infections.
- Hepatitis C treatment involves daily pills plus weekly injections. Your doctor can give you advice on how to deal with the side effects of treatment.
- Protect yourself and others by not sharing drug equipment and by having safer sex.

What can I do to protect myself and others from HIV and Hep C?

In addition to protecting others, it is very important to reduce your chance of being re-infected with other strains of either virus. The more strains you have, the harder both diseases are to treat.

Both HIV and Hep C can pass from person to person. HIV spreads during unprotected sex and by using contaminated needles and other equipment. Hep C spreads mainly by using contaminated needles, straws, spoons and other drug equipment used to inject or snort drugs. Unprotected sex is another way to transmit Hep C, particularly among people with HIV. There is also a risk that Hep C can be spread by unsafe tattooing and by sharing razors, scissors or toothbrushes.

