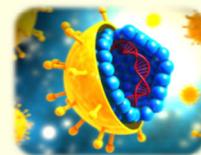


EXPANDING HCV TREATMENT AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

Hepatitis C affects over 5 million Americans and is the leading cause of death by an infectious disease in the United States.^{1,2} Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections are on the rise, and most new cases are associated with injection drug use.³

New, highly-effective HCV medications (called direct-acting antivirals or DAAs) are available, and HCV can now be treated with a daily pill taken for just 8-12 weeks.

But these medications are often not offered to people who inject drugs because of **stigma** and **misconceptions** about treating this population. It's time to address barriers to care and demand access to life-saving medications for all. **Here are the facts:**



HCV is increasing among people who inject drugs



- HCV is transmitted through contact with infected blood.
- Certain activities associated with injection drug use, such as sharing needles or other equipment, increase a person's risk of infection.
- Harm reduction services, such as syringe exchange programs, reduce the risk of HCV transmission, but such **services are not available in many communities**.
- The rise in HCV is related to increased drug use associated with the opioid crisis.³

HCV treatment is highly effective for people who inject drugs



- **HCV treatment is safe and just as effective for people who inject drugs as it is for others.** People who inject drugs have a 90% cure rate, even if they actively use drugs during treatment.⁵⁻⁶
- **People who inject drugs stick to treatment plans.** Healthcare providers may worry that people who use drugs will miss appointments, forget to take pills, or sell their medicine. But studies show that adherence to treatment is high among people who inject drugs.⁶
- **Chances of HCV reinfection are low.**⁷ Utilization of harm reduction strategies can help prevent reinfection among individuals at high risk.

Current medical guidelines recommend treatment for all



- Medical experts agree that individuals should be treated for HCV regardless of their drug use. In other words, current (or recent) **drug use is not a reason to withhold treatment**. Current treatment guidelines can be found at: <https://www.hcvguidelines.org/unique-populations/pwid>
- Insurance requirements to abstain from alcohol and/or drugs prior to treatment vary by state. Check the requirements in your state: <https://stateofhepc.org/>

Treating people who inject drugs is necessary to stop HCV



It is estimated that **40 – 74% of people who inject drugs are infected with HCV.**⁸⁻⁹ Treatment reduces the risk of ongoing disease transmission. It is impossible to eliminate HCV without addressing the epidemic in this population.



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