

More about Co-Infection

- HIV and Hepatitis C services in your area can offer support and information. They can also help connect you to other people living with HIV, Hepatitis C or co-infection.
- Building a healthcare team that you trust can help you live better with HIV Co-infection. In addition to a doctor and nurse, you may also see specialists—doctors who concentrate on a particular condition—such as an infectious disease specialist, HIV specialist or liver specialist (a hepatologist). Other people who can support you include a pharmacist, naturopath, counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, dietitian or social worker.

Someone I know is Co-Infected, should I treat them differently?

Absolutely not. They are the same person they were before they became co-infected, and they cannot transmit Hepatitis B, C, or HIV to you unless you share needles (including tattoo needles), piercing tools, nail clippers, razors or toothbrushes with them, or if you have unprotected sex with them. They can participate in Traditional Ceremonies such as Feasts and Sweats along with everyone else.

A person co-infected with Active Tuberculosis needs your support, even though they may be unable to see you until they are no longer contagious. While they recover from the TB, they may want you to call them, and support them.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about Co-Infection, you can talk with your local health clinic, specialist, doctor or nurse, or call the following places. You do not have to give your name to receive information.

Shining Mountains

Living Community Services:
(403) 346-9794

STI/HIV Toll Free Information
Line:
1-800-772-2437



Shining Mountains Living
Community Services

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Métis Communities



And

HIV

Co-Infection

HIV Co-infection in Métis Communities: The Facts

What is Co-infection?

Co-infection simply means a person living with HIV also is living with another infection, such as Hepatitis B or C or Tuberculosis at the same time.

Why is it important?

HIV affects the body's immune system. When someone who is living with HIV also has another infection such as Hepatitis C, both infections are harder on the body than they would be alone, and this affects the health of the person. They may respond differently to treatment than they would with only one infection.



Both infections may progress faster, and it may be harder to stay healthy than it would be otherwise.

How do I know whether I am co-infected?

A person can be co-infected and not know it. Both HIV and Hepatitis C are slow-acting viruses. People can be infected for years with either virus without having any signs or symptoms of illness.

Tests are the only way to find out for sure if you have HIV and Hepatitis B or C, or TB. The test for HIV and Hepatitis B is a blood test. Hepatitis C is detected with two blood tests. The test for TB may include a blood test, a test of your phlegm (spit) sample, and a chest X-ray.

HIV tests are given on request except in the case of pregnancy.

What does this have to do with Métis Communities???

Since the introduction of antiretroviral medications, liver disease has become the leading cause of death among people living with HIV in the Global North.

People who are Métis also experience multiple barriers to treatment, care and support services. Métis People are more vulnerable to HIV, Hepatitis B and C and Tuberculosis, partly because of historical trauma effects that resulted from Colonization and the attempted removal of Traditional Culture and Languages. The Impacts of colonization on Métis people in Canada, particularly the Residential School System, Scrip Trade, and appropriation of Métis children by Canadian authorities in the 1960's, has been linked to vulnerability to HIV and Tuberculosis in Canada.



This history has led to a mistrust of the healthcare system, authorities, discriminatory and racist treatment of Métis people, challenges in obtaining treatment coverage, isolation from services for rurally located people and vulnerability to drug use, mental health challenges and homelessness – all of which act as barriers to accessing treatment, care and support for HIV and Viral Hepatitis co-infection .

I have a co-infection, What do I need to know?

If you are living with HIV and Hepatitis B or C, or Tuberculosis, ask your doctor, health care professionals, and HIV support systems for information on how to best manage the infections. It is your right to ask questions so that you can understand what is happening inside your body.

Stay as healthy as you can. Eat well balanced meals, avoid and manage stress wherever possible in a healthy way, and get regular sleep and exercise.

Co-infection does not mean that you have to stay away from friends and family. The one exception to this is if you have active tuberculosis (TB). Anyone with active TB can obtain medication to cure the infection from your system, and you will be able to see and access your family once the doctor tells you that the TB can no longer make anyone around you sick. If you have inactive TB, you cannot make anyone sick.

If you are afraid or do not trust the doctors or nurses, ask someone to go with you to support you and ensure you are treated with respect and have all of your questions answered. If you are not comfortable with having a friend or family member go with you, and there is a local HIV or Hepatitis C agency near you, they often offer this service for people. If not, they may be able to connect you with a social worker who cannot tell anyone about your condition, or your emotions unless you give them permission to do so.

If you do not understand something, it is always ok to ask for it to be explained in a way that you are able to do so.