



# HIV/HCV & Safer Sex Practices for Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) Fact Sheet

## HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a blood-borne pathogen that weakens the immune system.

HIV can only be transmitted through the following fluids: blood, breastmilk, vaginal Fluid, rectal Fluid, semen (including pre-cum).

There is **no cure** and **no vaccine**. Once someone has HIV it is for life. However, HIV treatment that is adhered to can suppress the virus to an undetectable level, which will increase quality of life for the seropositive person, and greatly reduce the risk of transmission.

**Undetectable = Untransmittable  
(U=U)**

### **Risk of Transmission:**

**Fluid + Route + Activity = Risk of Transmission**

## HCV: Hepatitis C Virus

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a blood-borne pathogen that harms the liver. The liver breaks down toxins, aids in digestion, filters blood, metabolises drugs, and more, making it an important organ in the human body.

HCV has a **cure**, but **no vaccine**, and can only be transmitted through blood.

Many people can live 20-30 years without any negative effects from the virus, and still transmit it to other people, making it important to get tested regularly.

## Know your Status: Testing & Treatment

One way to ensure health and wellbeing in regards to HIV & HCV is regular testing and follow-up treatment when needed. It ensures that those who are seropositive are accessing the proper treatment and able to live long, healthy lives, and reduces the risk of transmission.

Once someone is diagnosed a treatment plan is created, and if adhered to, for HIV, the viral load will be undetectable in the blood and therefore untransmittable. For HCV, treatment will cure the person of the virus.

HIV & HCV testing requires a blood test, and results can take two weeks. All testing is confidential.

## PrEP/PEP for HIV

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is an immuno boosting oral medication that will ensure those who are HIV negative reduce the risk of transmission when coming into contact with HIV.

Similarly, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is an oral medication that is taken after exposure to HIV, and will greatly reduce the risk of transmission. PEP must be administered within 72 hours of exposure and must be highly adhered to.

Both these medications are only available through prescription from an applicable healthcare provider.

## Safer Sex Supplies

Barriers such as condoms (external and internal), oral dams, and lubricants will reduce the risk of transmission by preventing the spread of the virus and by decreasing tearing to the mucus membrane.

**All Information obtained from and for  
further information go to: [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca)**