

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 of 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.

What is Stigma?

Stigma is negative perceptions of a person or group of people based on a characteristic or activity

When people act on stigma it becomes discrimination.

HIV/HCV Related Stigma

HIV related stigma in particular, but HCV related stigma similarly, arises from fear and misunderstanding due to lack of education around the viruses.

From www.catie.ca:

"HIV-related discrimination is the unfair treatment of people on the basis of their actual or suspected HIV status. Discrimination against people living with HIV also extends to those populations at risk of HIV (e.g., men who have sex with men and people who inject drugs)."

Effects of Stigma

Stigma effects people in three distinct ways.

One, inhibits seropositive people* from accessing services, care, and treatment due to fear and experienced discrimination.

Two, increases HIV/HCV transmission and rates due to decrease treatment, adherence to treatment, access of care, and disclosure of status.

Three, effects the quality of care and life for people living with HIV and HCV.

*Seropositive refers to a positive blood test for a virus

All Information obtained from and for further information go to: www.catie.ca