

Health Advisory: HIV Outbreak in Persons Who Inject Drugs (PWID)

Minnesota Department of Health, Mon Feb 06 13:00 CST 2020

Action Steps:

Local and tribal health department: Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, convenience clinics, jails, correctional facilities, chemical dependency and treatment centers in your jurisdiction.

Hospitals, clinics and other facilities: Please forward to doctors and nurses.

Health care providers:

- Test all persons in the outbreak area at high risk for HIV (see below)
- Immediately link people with HIV to medical care, including antiretroviral therapy
- Provide referrals for effective harm reduction services, such as MDH's Syringe Service Programs (SSP)
- Report all cases of HIV to MDH at 651-201-5414 or 1877-676-5414, or via our confidential fax number, 651-797-1972

Background

The Minnesota Department of Health, Hennepin County and Ramsey County are investigating an outbreak of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections among persons who inject drugs (PWID). Many of the HIV-infected individuals in this outbreak are co-infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV). There have been 18 cases associated with the outbreak between December 2018 and January 2020. At the time of diagnosis, 13 cases resided in **Hennepin County** and 5 cases resided in **Ramsey County**. Many of these individuals have experienced homelessness.

Typically, we see 0-3 cases of HIV in PWID per year in these counties. This is a significant increase in numbers and has the potential to spread very quickly due to blood-to-blood contact.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

Test

- Persons who are at high risk of HIV infection should be tested when requested, or at least annually. Persons in the outbreak area should be tested more frequently.
- Persons likely to be at high risk include:
 - Sex partners or syringe-sharing partners of people known to be living with HIV,
 - PWID and their sex partners and needle/equipment sharing partners,
 - Persons who exchange sex for income or other items they need,
- Ensure all persons diagnosed with HCV infection are tested for HIV infection.
- All other persons should be tested annually as indicated in the [CDC Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women in Health-Care Settings](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm). (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm>)

HEALTH ADVISORY: HIV OUTBREAK IN PERSONS WHO INJECT DRUGS (PWID)

Treat

- Link newly diagnosed persons to HIV medical care,
- Ensure that persons living with HIV are engaged in care and receiving antiretroviral therapy and
- Ensure persons receiving treatment for HIV adhere to prescribed therapy and are engaged in ongoing care.

Prevent

- Screen patients for factors that increase the risk of getting HIV.
- Complete a sexual and behavioral risk assessment for all patients.
- This should include an assessment of sexual and substance use practices for both the individual and their sexual partners.
- Provide or refer PWID for MDH's [Syringe Service Programs](#)
- Refer for medication-assisted treatment (e.g., opioid substitutions therapy) and counseling services, when appropriate, and
- Provide or refer for prevention services such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) | HIV Risk and Prevention | HIV/AIDS | CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html>) and PEP Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) | HIV Risk and Prevention | HIV/AIDS | CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep.html>)

Report

- All cases of HIV should be reported by phone to 651-201-5414, 877-676-5414 or by filling out a [HIV/AIDS Confidential Case Report Form](#) and faxing to our confidential fax number, 651-797-1972

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network](#)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.