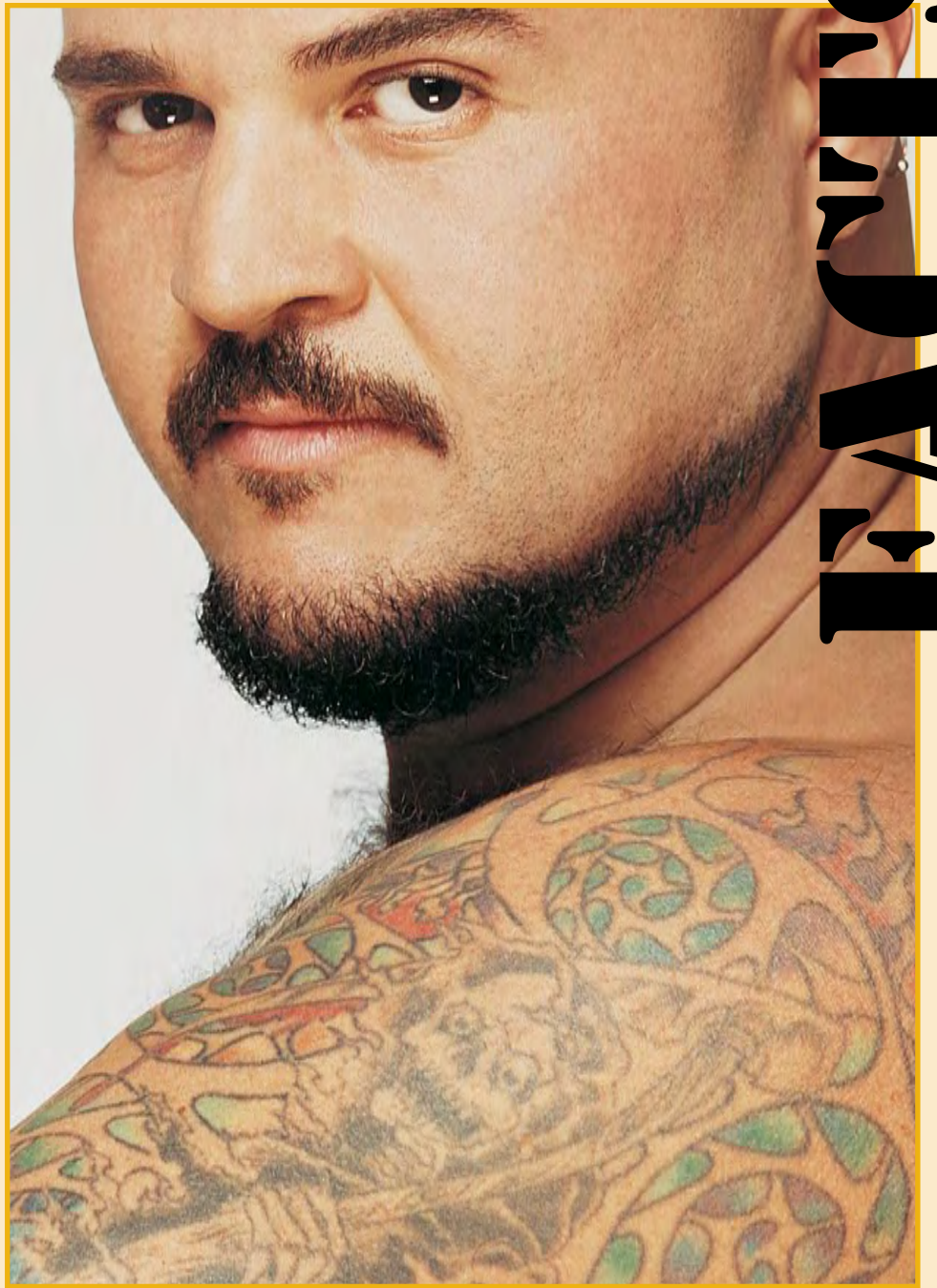


# HIV & Hep C Coinfection

When a person is infected with two or more different viruses it is called coinfection.

**1 OUT  
OF 3  
PEOPLE  
WITH  
HIV  
HAVE  
HEP C**

Infection with the hepatitis C virus (HCV or Hep C for short) is the most common coinfection in people with HIV. Complications of HIV and Hep C coinfection has become an increasingly important medical issue. As improvements in HIV treatment have reduced the number of deaths due to HIV and opportunistic illnesses, liver disease has become **A LEADING CAUSE OF HOSPITALIZATION AND DEATH** in people with HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that about 1 million people in the U.S. are infected with HIV and approximately 4 million are infected with Hep C – as many as **300,000 PEOPLE** with HIV may also be coinfecting with hepatitis C.



**FACTS**

This information is provided by the Hepatitis C Support Project. Reprint permission is granted and encouraged with credit to the Hepatitis C Support Project.

## HIV & Hepatitis C Coinfection

Hepatitis C Support Project  
PO Box 427037  
San Francisco, CA 94142  
[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

Executive Director  
Editor-in-Chief,  
HCSP Publications  
Alan Franciscus  
[alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org](mailto:alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org)

Author  
Alan Franciscus

Managing Editor  
Web master  
C.D. Mazoff, PhD

Design and Production  
Leslie Hoex, Blue Kangaroo Design  
[www.bluekangaroodesign.com](http://www.bluekangaroodesign.com)

Printing and creative support provided by Roche

Version 2.0 2006

### HIV RESOURCES:

*Project Inform:*  
[www.projectinform.org](http://www.projectinform.org)  
hotline: 800-822-7422

*San Francisco  
AIDS Foundation:*  
[www.sfaf.org](http://www.sfaf.org)  
hotline: 800-367-2437

*National AIDS Treatment  
Advocacy Project:*  
[www.natap.org](http://www.natap.org)

*AIDSMeds.com:*  
[www.aidsmeds.com](http://www.aidsmeds.com)



[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)



# HIV & Hep C Coinfection

# FACTS

*Take Action...*

**FIGHT BACK**

**HCSP**

FOR LIVING POSITIVELY

BEING WELL



[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

## HIV & HEP C COINFECTION

HIV and Hep C have similar **BLOOD-TO-BLOOD** transmission routes. Because both HIV and Hep C are transmitted through the sharing of needles and works, many injection drug users get both diseases – in some groups of injection drug users, the rate of coinfection is as high as 90% (9 out of 10 people). In addition, a significant number of people who received blood transfusions before blood donations were tested for HIV and Hep C are also coinfecting. Though Hep C is less likely than HIV to be transmitted sexually or from mother to baby during pregnancy, some studies have shown that the risk of sexual or mother-to-baby Hep C transmission is **GREATER** if a person also has HIV.

With the introduction of newer medications to treat HIV, people are living longer only to be faced with hep C-related **LIVER DISEASE**. As a result liver disease is now a leading cause of death in people coinfecting with HIV and Hep C. Compared to people without HIV, coinfecting people have a **GREATER RISK** and **FASTER PROGRESSION** of their liver disease. In fact, people who are coinfecting are at a greater risk of developing severe liver damage—**MORE THAN TWO OR THREE TIMES AS FAST** as for someone who has Hep C alone. It is hard to predict at what rate your liver disease will progress, but in a recent study, 1 out of 4 patients progressed from mild to significant liver scarring in less than 3 years. The good news is that you can do something about the damage Hep C is doing to your liver!



The way that Hep C affects HIV disease is not as clear, but people with Hep C may have a higher chance of liver-related problems due to the **DRUGS USED TO TREAT HIV**. Some people may even have to stop taking or change their HIV drugs because of the damage some of these medications can cause to the liver; this is why it is so important that you keep your liver healthy.

**THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE AND THE INFECTIOUS DISEASES SOCIETY OF AMERICA RECOMMEND THAT ALL PEOPLE WITH HIV BE TESTED FOR HEP C.**

## THE LIVER

The liver is the largest organ in the body. It is called a '**NON-COMPLAINING ORGAN**' since it can be damaged and a person might not even know it. One of the most important functions that the liver performs is that it filters – what people eat, breathe and substances that get on the skin. **THE LIVER PROCESSES HIV MEDICINES** so it is important that people with HIV keep their livers healthy. If hepatitis C causes enough damage to the liver it may not be possible to start or stay on your HIV medications. Alcohol can also cause liver damage so it is important that someone with Hep C reduce or stop drinking alcohol. Finally, there are medications (vaccines) to protect you from other hepatitis viruses that are recommended for people with HIV and Hep C. There is **NO VACCINE** for Hep C.



**DID YOU KNOW THAT THE AVERAGE TIME IT TAKES FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV AND HEP C TO PROGRESS TO CIRRHOSIS (MASSIVE SCARRING OF THE LIVER) IS 7 YEARS?**

HCSPP

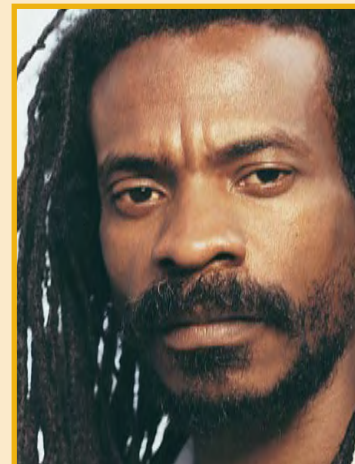
FOR LIVING POSITIVELY

BEING WELL

HEPATITIS C  
SUPPORT PROJECT

## HEP C IN PEOPLE WITH HIV – CARING FOR YOUR LIVER

People with HIV who have been diagnosed with Hep C should be evaluated by a healthcare provider who specializes in these diseases. Talking to a healthcare provider about Hep C in someone with HIV is **MORE URGENT** than in someone with Hep C alone since the rate of liver disease progression is faster. It is best to begin a conversation with your doctor about maintaining liver health before Hep C can do further damage.



**SUPPORT GROUPS** can be very helpful for people coinfecting with HIV and hepatitis C, especially when dealing with the **EMOTIONAL ISSUES** of managing, treating and living with these two chronic, life-threatening diseases.

Probably the best thing to do is to learn as much as you can about HIV and hepatitis C **COINFECTION**. Talk with a medical provider about your options.

**FIGHT LIVER DAMAGE – TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR**

## CONCLUSION



Hep C is a **LEADING CAUSE OF ILLNESS** in people with HIV and is a very real medical concern for people living with HIV. But there is hope, and the more that you learn about HIV and hepatitis C the better you will be able to **ADVOCATE** for yourself. Get help from family, friends and your medical care team to make sure that you **STAY HEALTHY** and **LIVE LONGER**.

# FACTS

**DON'T WAIT, IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION & FIGHT BACK**



HEPATITIS C  
SUPPORT PROJECT

**GET THE FACTS!**

[www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)