

Statistics and Trends- Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

- Hepatitis C is more common than HIV.
- About 4 million people in the United States are infected with hepatitis C, which is about 2% of the population. This number is expected to increase to 10.8 million in the next 10 to 12 years.
- Most infections are due to illegal injection drug use.
- Transfusion-associated cases occurred prior to blood donor screening; now occurs in less than one per 2 million transfused units of blood.
- Estimated 3.9 million (1.8%) Americans have been infected with HCV, of whom 2.7 million are chronically infected.
- The risk for prenatal HCV transmission is about 4%
- If co-infected with HIV, the risk for prenatal infection is about 19%

Prevention of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

- There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.
- Do not inject drugs; if you inject drugs, stop and get into a treatment program, you may call 1-800-996-1051. If you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water, or "works", and get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B.
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes).
- Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood on them or if the artist or piercer does not follow good health practices.
- HCV can be spread by sex, but this is rare. If you are having sex with more than one steady sex partner, use latex condoms* correctly and every time to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. You should also get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue.

Groups at Highest Risk for HCV.

Chronic hepatitis C infection is more common in certain groups, such as the homeless, Vietnam War Veterans, prison population, and hemophiliacs. The incidence is high in these groups because they are more likely to have the risk factors associated with hepatitis C. The highest rates of HCV infection are among Intravenous (IV) drug users; **70% to 90% of IV drug users are infected HCV.**

Tissue Infection (Abscess and Cellulitis)

Soft tissue infections (STI's), including **abscesses** and **cellulitis**, are a common complication of injection drug use. In 1997, 54 (32%) of 169 injection drug users (IDU's) in one San Francisco neighborhood had a drug-injection--related abscess or cellulites

What is an abscess?

An abscess is a pocket of pus. Pus means you have an infection. Pus is made of dead tissue, germs (bacteria), and white blood cells. The white blood cells rally around to kill the germs. Sometimes, abscesses will burst and drain, a way the body has of getting rid of the infection.

What causes an abscess?

An abscess can start anywhere in the body where bacteria infects tissue. Drug shooters often get abscesses on their arms or legs -- mostly (but not always) at injection sites. You are more likely to damage tissue and develop an abscess when you "skin pop," "muscle it," or miss your vein. Both the cut and the drug itself can cause infection and damage tissue. You can even get an abscess AFTER you stop injecting.

Where do the germs come from?

Germs are invisible without a microscope. They are on most surfaces, including skin, and on any used item such as a rig, cooker, cotton, or tourniquet. Germs are on your skin -- even if you think you're clean. All of these germs can get into your body.

What signs do I look for?

A hard, reddish, tender lump. It will usually appear at the injection site, but it can also pop up in other places. The lump might feel warmer than the skin around it. It might even feel hot. It usually hurts. It might look pink and puffy. If it gets bigger, the infection is getting worse. As the infection spreads, you might see red streaks spreading out and away from the abscess. The infection might make you feel tired or cause fever or chills. You might have chest pains if the infection goes to your heart or lungs.

What should I do if I get an abscess?

Go to a CLINIC if:

- It has not improved after 5 to 7 days.
- The lump gets bigger or more painful.
- You see red streaks spreading out from the lump.
- The lump is hot, puffy, and pink, or if you get a fever.

Go to the EMERGENCY ROOM if:

- You have chest pains.
- You have chills or a high fever.
- The infection looks like it is spreading really fast.

How can I reduce my risk for abscesses?

- Before you shoot, **WASH** your skin and hands with **HOT, SOAPY WATER**. Hot water and vigorous rubbing makes the veins bigger, too.
- Use a **BRAND NEW, STERILE NEEDLE** *every time you inject or divide drugs*. If you can't get a new needle, use one that is well-rinsed, bleached for at least 30 seconds, rinse again with fresh, clean water, and bleach again for at least 30 seconds. Repeat a **THIRD** time for best results
- Use clean cottons, clean cookers and fresh, clean water *every time*.
- Clean the injection site properly with alcohol wipes.
- Don't lick the needle before you inject. You carry a lot of bacteria in your mouth that can cause infections under your skin.
- Choose good veins. Keep your veins big and fat by drinking lots of water. It is harder to miss when you have big veins. Sometimes a miss will get infected and turn into an abscess.
- Use a tourniquet. This increases blood pressure in the veins and makes skinnier veins bigger around, easier to see, and easier to hit.
- Slow down. Relax. Take a deep breath to help keep your hand steady so you don't miss. Shaky hands from a 5- day speed run or from being dope sick can cause you to miss.
- Avoid shooting into your hands and especially avoid feet and legs.

****NEEDLE EXCHANGE PARTICIPANTS HAVE PRIORITY** when registering for Detox at Tarzana Treatment Centers. Please ask for a referral from your on-site needle exchange Health Educator in order to have your admission expedited. Tarzana Treatment Centers offers in-patient Detox programs, as well as Residential and Outpatient Programs for clients. When calling for an appointment, make sure to tell the receptionist that you are a Needle Exchange client and have a referral from your Needle Exchange Health Educator.





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If you or someone in your family needs help identifying and treating a drug addiction problem, Tarzana Treatment Centers can help. Addictions to alcohol and drugs such as amphetamines, cocaine, heroin, meth, crack, pot (marijuana), LSD, acid, inhalants, and prescription drugs are addressed. We offer a free assessment for outpatient, medical detoxification and on-site residential rehabilitation services for adults and specialty services for women and teens.

Based on what you need, you will be treated with our specialist and highly trained staff. Our facilities are throughout Southern California (Tarzana, Northridge, Antelope Valley, Reseda, and Long Beach). We are available 24 hours a day to provide further information or schedule an appointment.

Thank You
For Being a Part of the Solution



TARZANA TREATMENT CENTERS
Integrated Behavioral Healthcare

Help Prevent the Spread of HIV & Hepatitis C

Information You Should Know



Statistics and Trends- HIV

- As of December of 2004, there are over 859,000 reported cases of HIV in the United States
- About 79,000 of those cases are people living in California.
- Estimates show that between 8,000 and 9,000 people are infected with HIV in California each year.
- There are an estimated 54,000 people living with AIDS in California alone
- At the end of 2003, approximately 1 in 4 people who had developed AIDS were injection drug users

HIV weakens your immune system. HIV becomes AIDS when your immune system can't keep fighting illnesses and you start getting diseases called opportunistic infections. They take advantage of your weakened immune system. Most doctors prescribe drugs to help prevent opportunistic infections when your CD4 count drops below 200. A CD4 count is a measure of your T-cells. T-cells are a kind of white blood cell that fights infections as part of your immune system.

Ways HIV can be transmitted by:

- Sharing needles when shooting drugs
- Vaginal, anal, and oral sex
- Tattooing or body piercing without sterile equipment
- Accidental needle sticks
- Blood transfusion

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is found in the blood of persons who have this disease.

HCV is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person.

