



England's Chronic Hepatitis C Cases Cut in Half Since 2015

The large reduction is attributed to increased access to testing and treatment in the United Kingdom.

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A new report found that [chronic hepatitis C virus](#) (HCV) cases in England decreased by more than half (51.6%) from 2015 to 2022, according to the [UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\)](#).

[The Hepatitis C in England report](#) found that the number of people over 16 years old living with chronic HCV in England declined from about 129,400 in 2015 to 62,600 in 2022, which can be attributed to increased testing and improved access to [effective antiviral treatment](#) since 2015, according to UKHSA.

HCV is a potentially contagious but curable disease caused by a virus that infects the liver. The bloodborne virus can cause lifelong infection, fibrosis (mild to moderate liver scarring), cirrhosis (serious liver scarring), liver cancer, liver failure and death. There are two phases of HCV infection—acute and chronic. An HCV infection that is less than six months old is acute, while one that lasts more than six months is chronic.

Last year, the National Health Service (NHS) England [launched a website](#) for ordering self-testing HCV kits. Since May 2023, about 16,000 kits have been ordered. What's more, nearly 78,000 individuals have benefited from treatment since effective antiviral drugs became available in 2015, according to NHS England data.

"The symptoms of hepatitis C can go unnoticed for years. But the sooner you are diagnosed, the quicker you can get access to effective treatments and prevent serious liver damage," said Monica Desai, MD, the hepatitis C lead at the UKHSA, in the press release.

In the United Kingdom, HCV is primarily spread by sharing needles or syringes, according to UKHSA. Of the estimated 62,600 people living with HCV in 2022, about 20% are estimated to be among people who are currently or have recently injected drugs, and about 65% are in people who have previously injected drugs but are no longer injecting.

Effective HVC treatments have helped reduce HCV-related mortality. In fact, deaths from HCV are at their lowest in 10 years (0.44 deaths per 100,000 population in 2022, compared with 0.69 per

100,000 in 2015).

“Hepatitis C elimination is in reach if we can accelerate testing, support people to access effective treatment, reduce the stigma experienced by people living with hepatitis C and prevent people getting the infection in the first place—particularly for people who inject drugs,” Desai said.

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