Hepatitis C Spikes Among Cape Cod Youth

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Infection rates for the hepatitis C virus (HCV) are spiking among young people in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, according to the state health department and reported by the Cape Cod Times. These youth now have the highest incidence rates among 15- to 25-year-olds in the state.

According to local health officials, in 2012 there were 67 confirmed cases of hep C among youth ages 15 to 25 in the region, with an incidence rate of 344.3 per 100,000. The high incidence is probably tied to the growing opiate addiction epidemic, which has led to a similar uptick in local injection drug use.

In response, several health service organizations are now handing out free prescriptions for HCV tests to young people in Cape Cod. Health advocates are also trying to get the word out that sharing any injection drug paraphernalia, from syringes down to basic cookers and cottons, can lead to hepatitis C transmission.

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