



HIV and Hepatitis C Coinfection

Introduction to HIV and Hepatitis C Coinfection

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a disease that infects the liver. Hep C can cause lifelong infection, and over time it can cause fibrosis (mild to moderate liver scarring), cirrhosis (serious liver scarring), liver cancer, liver failure and death.

What is HIV?

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) mostly infects CD4 cells, also known as T cells. These white blood cells coordinate the immune system to fight disease. AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is a condition caused by HIV. When your immune system breaks down, you can develop many serious, often deadly infections and cancers known as opportunistic infections.

Hepatitis C is common among people living with HIV. In the United States, approximately 25 percent of people living with HIV are coinfecting with HCV. This means that about 225,000 to 330,000 people in the United States are living with both viruses.

HIV can worsen hepatitis C. Not only does HIV increase the risk of liver damage, but it can also speed up the onset of liver damage following infection. It is important for people who are coinfecting with HIV and HCV to work closely with their health care providers in order to safely and effectively monitor and treat both conditions.

If you are living with HCV and are NOT coinfecting with HIV, please check out [Hep's comprehensive lesson](#) on the diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of hepatitis C.

If you are living with HIV and are NOT coinfecting with HCV, please check out POZ's comprehensive lesson on the diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of HIV.

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