



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



Temporary suspension of non-urgent Hepatitis C (HCV) testing

April 9, 2020

All **non-urgent** HCV testing at the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory (PHL) is temporarily suspended to redirect resources to support COVID-19 testing. This includes all routine HCV screening and testing related to HCV treatment. The BCCDC PHL performs more than 95% of all BC's HCV testing.

When HCV testing resumes, health care providers will be notified. People can **sign up for HCV testing reminders through [SmartSexResource.com](https://www.smartsexresource.com)**, or **sign up to the [STI Updates blog](#)** to receive a notification when HCV testing resumes.

What HCV testing will continue?

HCV testing will still be conducted for:

- Specimens that were received at the BCCDC PHL by March 31, 2020
- Hospitalized patients
- Emergency situations
- Organ donors

Is it safe to wait until after the COVID-19 crisis to get HCV testing?

Yes. This may be challenging for people who are waiting to get HCV tested, treated, or to find out if their treatment cured their HCV infection. While HCV infection does cause progressive liver damage, the decision to suspend non-urgent HCV testing was carefully reviewed by BC Medical Health Officers, laboratory experts and the BC Provincial Health Officer (BC PHO). They determined that this short term change will not pose undue risk to the health of British Columbians. HCV medications cure over 95% of people who finish the treatment.

What if someone has been exposed to the blood of a person living with HCV infection?

People concerned about a possible exposure to the blood of someone with HCV infection, or other possible blood infections (e.g., hepatitis B, HIV) during the COVID-19 crisis, contact your primary health care provider or local urgent care centre, to discuss **urgent** testing and other possible follow-up, within 72 hours (if medications to prevent HIV are recommended, they should be started within 72 hours, ideally within 2 hours). During the COVID-19 crisis, the BC PHO's guidance is to **avoid non-urgent medical care**, and to focus on home isolation and physical distancing precautions.

Who to contact to discuss concerns

- Request a telehealth consult with a healthcare provider
- Visit the [BC Hepatitis Clinics](#) map to find out who to call in one's area
- Visit [Help4HepBC](#) or call 1-888-411-7578 to speak with a peer who has lived HCV experience
- Health Care Providers can call the BCCDC PHL to clarify urgent HCV test-related issues related to HCV testing

If a person thinks they might have HCV, they can prevent passing it to others by not sharing:

- Injection drug use equipment (e.g., needles, syringes, cookers, water, filters, spoons)
- Other drug use equipment (e.g., bubble pipes, pipe stems, straws)
- Personal items that might have tiny amounts of blood on them (e.g., nail clippers, toothbrushes)

HCV is only passed on through blood-to-blood contact, so things like hugging and kissing are safe. However, hugging and kissing with people outside of your household may put you at risk for COVID-19. It is possible for HCV to be passed on through condomless sex if there is exchange of blood, so always use condoms and water-based lube to reduce the risk of possible transmission.

More information and resources

For community

General HCV information

[BCCDC Diseases and Conditions – Hepatitis C](#)

[Hepatitis Education Canada \(for community\)](#)

[BCCDC Online course - Hepatitis C: The Basics \(1 hour\)](#)

[Pacific Hepatitis C Network](#)

Health care providers

In-depth HCV information

[BCCDC Hepatitis C Guidelines](#)

[Hepatitis Education Canada \(for providers\)](#)

[BCCDC Online Course - Hepatitis C for Public Health Care Providers \(3-4 hours\)](#)

HCV and COVID-19

[World Hepatitis Alliance](#)

[CATIE – COVID-19 and HCV, HIV](#)

HCV and COVID-19

[Care of patients with liver disease during the COVID-19 pandemic: EASL-ESCMID Position paper](#)

[AASLD Clinical insights for hepatology and liver transplant providers during the covid-19 pandemic](#)

COVID-19

[BCCDC Disease and conditions – COVID-19](#)

COVID-19

[BCCDC Health Professionals Resources – COVID-19](#)

Learn more at bccdc.ca/covid19

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