Health Advisory: HIV Outbreak in Persons Who Inject Drugs (PWID)

Minnesota Department of Health, Mon Feb 06 13:00 CST 2020

**Action Steps:**

**Local and tribal health department:** Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, convenience clinics, jails, correctional facilities, chemical dependency and treatment centers in your jurisdiction.

**Hospitals, clinics and other facilities:** Please forward to doctors and nurses.

**Health care providers:**

- Test all persons in the outbreak area at high risk for HIV (see below)
- Immediately link people with HIV to medical care, including antiretroviral therapy
- Provide referrals for effective harm reduction services, such as MDH’s Syringe Service Programs (SSP)
- Report all cases of HIV to MDH at 651-201-5414 or 1877-676-5414, or via our confidential fax number, 651-797-1972

**Background**

The Minnesota Department of Health, Hennepin County and Ramsey County are investigating an outbreak of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections among persons who inject drugs (PWID). Many of the HIV-infected individuals in this outbreak are co-infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV). There have been 18 cases associated with the outbreak between December 2018 and January 2020. At the time of diagnosis, 13 cases resided in Hennepin County and 5 cases resided in Ramsey County. Many of these individuals have experienced homelessness.

Typically, we see 0-3 cases of HIV in PWID per year in these counties. This is a significant increase in numbers and has the potential to spread very quickly due to blood-to-blood contact.

**Recommendations for Health Care Providers**

**Test**

- Persons who are at high risk of HIV infection should be tested when requested, or at least annually. Persons in the outbreak area should be tested more frequently.
- Persons likely to be at high risk include:
  - Sex partners or syringe-sharing partners of people known to be living with HIV,
  - PWID and their sex partners and needle/equipment sharing partners,
  - Persons who exchange sex for income or other items they need,
- Ensure all persons diagnosed with HCV infection are tested for HIV infection.
- All other persons should be tested annually as indicated in the [CDC Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women in Health-Care Settings](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm)
Treat

- Link newly diagnosed persons to HIV medical care,
- Ensure that persons living with HIV are engaged in care and receiving antiretroviral therapy and
- Ensure persons receiving treatment for HIV adhere to prescribed therapy and are engaged in ongoing care.

Prevent

- Screen patients for factors that increase the risk of getting HIV.
- Complete a sexual and behavioral risk assessment for all patients.
- This should include an assessment of sexual and substance use practices for both the individual and their sexual partners.
- Provide or refer PWID for MDH’s Syringe Service Programs
- Refer for medication-assisted treatment (e.g., opioid substitutions therapy) and counseling services, when appropriate, and
- Provide or refer for prevention services such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) | HIV Risk and Prevention | HIV/AIDS | CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html) and PEP Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) | HIV Risk and Prevention | HIV/AIDS | CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep.html)

Report

- All cases of HIV should be reported by phone to 651-201-5414, 877-676-5414 or by filling out a HIV/AIDS Confidential Case Report Form and faxing to our confidential fax number, 651-797-1972

A copy of this HAN is available at: MDH Health Alert Network

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.