

May 6, 2025

## **Public Health Alert – HIV update**

### **Situation**

Since late 2024, the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) catchment area has recorded three cases of HIV in infants.

In at least one of the cases, no prenatal care had been accessed, although there were known interactions with health care providers during the pregnancy for other health issues.

The [main risk factors](#) are drug use, homeless/underhoused, sharing drug use equipment, and not using condoms.

### **Actions for health care providers**

- Take all opportunities to promote and facilitate access to prenatal care, including in ER, and especially with clients who use drugs, are experiencing homelessness, or have cognitive, intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Make referrals to supports
- Educate clients on prevention
- Encourage testing when indicated
- Educate clients that HIV is a treatable disease
- Gather detailed information on the best way to contact the case and those exposed for all STBBIs
- Consider PrEP and PEP
- Facilitate treatment

### **Additional information/support for health care providers**

#### Testing

- Point of Care (POC) testing is available at the NWHU
- NWHU can support other health care agencies in setting up point of care testing
- Visit [HIV Testing Ontario](#) for the Ontario Guidelines for Providers Offering HIV testing, including getting set up to receive POC test kits free of charge
- Further information and guidance are available in Public Health Agency of Canada's [HIV Screening and Testing Guide](#)
- Individuals can be referred to [Get a Kit](#) or [I'm Ready To Know](#) for self testing

## Treatment

- [Ontario HIV Treatment Network](#)
- [Ontario Guidelines for Providers offering HIV Testing – HIV Testing Ontario](#)
- [Effectiveness, uptake and delivery of non-occupational HIV post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\) – Ontario HIV Treatment Network](#)
- [HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\) in Ontario, 2021 – The Ontario HIV Treatment Network](#)

**Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)** is indicated for those who are not yet infected but have ongoing risk. [Canadian guideline](#) on PrEP use indications include:

- People who inject drugs if they share injection drug use equipment with a person with non-negligible risk of HIV infection
- Men who have sex with men who report condomless anal sex within the last 6 months and who have:
  - Infectious syphilis
  - Recurrent use of nonoccupational postexposure prophylaxis (more than one use)
  - Ongoing sexual relationship with an HIV positive partner with risk of transmissible HIV
  - Other high-risk criteria
- Heterosexual, condomless vaginal or anal sex where HIV positive partner has risk of transmissible HIV

**Non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** is indicated for individuals in emergency situations and is not intended for regular use. PEP can be considered when there is greater than a negligible to low risk of HIV acquisition. Further detail can be found at [this source](#).

Additional treatment resources:

- <https://www.ohtn.on.ca/rapid-response-awareness-accessibility-and-uptake-of-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-among-cisgender-and-transgender-women-at-risk-of-hiv-infection/>
- <https://www.ohtn.on.ca/prep-for-cisgender-women-a-guide-for-healthcare-providers/>

## Prevention

- Harm reduction supplies including single-use needles are key, given the risk factors specific to NWHU area
- Condoms, dental dams, and substance use harm reduction supplies are available free of charge at NWHU

## **Contact**

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