

# Hepatitis C Screening May Boost Opioid Treatment Success

When people find out they have the infection, they're more likely to stay off drugs

## [En Español](#)

FRIDAY, Oct. 20, 2017 (HealthDay News) -- Opioid abuse therapy may be more effective if patients are screened for hepatitis C as part of the program, a new Canadian study says.

The research found a sharp drop in opioid abuse among patients after they were told they tested positive for the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Hepatitis C causes liver disease that can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver cancer and liver failure, the researchers said.

"Our study showed awareness of HCV infection among this particular population may motivate them to reduce their consumption and hopefully high-risk behavior," said lead investigator Dr. Hooman Farhang Zangneh, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Toronto Centre for Liver Disease at Toronto General Hospital.

The primary cause of hepatitis C transmission is infected blood, which is often transmitted through needle sharing to inject drugs.

The study included more than 2,400 patients at 43 addiction treatment clinics in Ontario who were screened for hepatitis C infection. Of those patients, nearly 22 percent tested positive for the virus.

After following these patients for a year, the researchers found that those who tested positive for hepatitis C were 33 percent more likely to significantly reduce their use of non-prescribed opioids, benzodiazepines and cocaine than those who tested negative for the virus.

"Bearing in mind that effective, accessible and durable curative options are currently available, it is highly advisable to screen these clients and use this opportunity as an appropriate time to share motivational and educational resources and information with them. This way, we can provide enhanced support for them, which will have beneficial effects in both individual and societal levels," Zangneh said in a news release from the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases.

The study is to be presented Friday at the association's annual meeting, in Washington, D.C. Findings presented at meetings are typically viewed as preliminary until they've been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

## **More information**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [hepatitis C](#).

SOURCE: American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, news release, Oct. 20, 2017

-- [Robert Preidt](#)

Last Updated: Oct 20, 2017