



Immigrants and newcomers: Hepatitis C elimination

The *Ontario Hepatitis C Elimination Roadmap* is charting the path to eliminate hepatitis C.

More than 110,000 Ontarians are living with hepatitis C, a leading cause of death and chronic illness from an infectious disease. However, with widespread testing, an effective cure and proven prevention strategies, eliminating hepatitis C is within reach. The *Roadmap* outlines strategies to eliminate hepatitis C as a public health threat in Ontario by 2030, including among immigrants and newcomers from countries where hepatitis C is common.

Read the full *Ontario Hepatitis C Elimination Roadmap* at on.endhepc.ca.

The context of hepatitis C among immigrants and newcomers

In Canada, 2% of all immigrants and newcomers have had a current or past hepatitis C infection. Most acquired hepatitis C in their country of origin, primarily through inadequately sterilized medical equipment or unscreened blood products.

Common barriers to hepatitis C care include difficulty accessing healthcare, systemic racism, stigma and misinformation around infectious diseases. People born outside of Canada are not diagnosed until, on average, 10 years after arriving. Immigrants with hepatitis C are more likely to be hospitalized and to die of hepatitis C-related causes because of longer disease progression as a result of delayed diagnosis.

Newcomers and immigrants have not traditionally been prioritized for hepatitis C screening, and many providers are not aware of the risk for this group. Primary care providers, including community health centres and walk-in clinics, are important stakeholders to expand care.

How to address hepatitis C for immigrants and newcomers

- **Promote education and awareness on hepatitis C among health providers and health organizations** who work with immigrants and newcomers, including as part of existing immigrant or newcomer health programs.
- **Train local primary care providers to begin testing and treating hepatitis C** in their community, including tailored training and clinical supports.
- **Build awareness among immigrant communities to destigmatize hepatitis C and encourage testing.** Local community partners, such faith-based or cultural organizations and local businesses, can be important partners to reach these communities.
- **Expand access to services and information in multiple languages**, including the use of providers who can offer in-language care, in-language client resources and medical interpretation services.