Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care
Public Health
300 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R3B 3M9

May 8, 2026

Re: Public health emergency declared for HIV in Manitoba

Dear Health Care Provider:

On May 7, 2026, Public Health officials with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care declared a public health emergency to combat the spread of HIV in Manitoba (https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=73717).

New cases of HIV in Manitoba have been steadily increasing, from 90 new cases in 2019 to a high of 328 in 2025 (21.6 new cases / 100,000 people), which is one of the highest rates in Canada. The highest per capita HIV rates are currently in the Prairie Mountain health region, followed by the Northern health region. The largest number of new HIV cases is in Winnipeg. Case numbers for HIV and other STBBI are updated quarterly in the STBBI Surveillance Report at https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/stbbi/index.html.

HIV characteristics in Manitoba:

- Risk factors for acquiring HIV in Manitoba are different from national trends.
- Infection is most commonly acquired through injection drug use and unprotected heterosexual sex, and is associated with the convergence of homelessness, mental health concerns, substance use and socio-economic inequality.
- Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately impacted.
- More than 50 percent of cases are female (Canadian average is 32 percent).
- There was one perinatal HIV case in 2024 and another in 2025. Most newly-diagnosed females are under 40 years old, which increases the risk of more perinatal cases.
- People living in rural and remote areas may face additional challenges in accessing care.
- HIV stigma and misinformation create additional barriers to seeking care and support.

Manitoba has one of the lowest proportions in Canada of people living with HIV who are on treatment and are virally suppressed. The following recommendations for health care providers can support the emergency response:

- Test for all STBBIs and reduce stigma by emphasizing that STBBI testing (https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/sti/stbbi-testing.html) is part of regular health care. **At a minimum**:
    - offer HIV/STBBI testing to **all pregnant people** at their first prenatal visit, in the third trimester, and at delivery if HIV status is unknown, and
    - offer STBBI testing regularly to anyone who is sexually active.

- Refer patients who test positive for HIV to the Manitoba HIV Program (see https://mbhiv.ca/healthcare-providers/) or Pediatric Infectious Diseases.
- Medications to prevent and treat HIV are covered under the Manitoba Enhanced Pharmacare Program (MEPP) https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/pharmacare/mepp.html.
- HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a highly effective pharmacologic method of preventing HIV infection when taken as prescribed. PrEP is underutilized in Manitoba. **Eligible Manitobans at high risk of acquiring HIV now have two options for HIV PrEP at no cost under the MEPP: oral medication (daily or "on-demand") or long-acting injectable medication.**
    - **Any licensed Manitoba prescriber** can prescribe HIV PrEP.
    - The Eligibility Criteria and Guidance for Manitoba HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/docs/prep_eligibility_criteria.pdf) has been updated to include eligibility criteria, considerations, and guidance regarding the use of intramuscular cabotegravir long-acting (CAB-LA) PrEP. CAB-LA is an important option to consider for patients who are at high risk of non-compliance with daily oral PrEP regimens and regular follow-up.
- Consider HIV post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for potential high risk exposures, see https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/pep.html.
- Some people living with HIV face barriers to remain connected to care. Health care providers can use the Referral to Public Health: HIV Care Engagement Request Form (https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/docs/referral_hiv_request_form.pdf) to facilitate reconnecting patients to care.
- Providers can also refer to the Manitoba Public Health HIV protocol at https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/hiv.pdf for current information on HIV prevention, testing, and follow-up.

Please share this information with all relevant colleagues in your facility.

Sincerely,

"Original signed by"

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