

Hepatitis C kills more Americans than HIV: study

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More Americans died in 2007 of hepatitis C infection, which causes incurable liver disease, than from the virus that causes AIDS, US health authorities said this week.

More than 15,000 people died of [hepatitis C infection](#) in 2007, compared to 12,734 who died from HIV-related causes, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, published in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#).

Prior to 2007, [human immunodeficiency virus](#) was more deadly than hepatitis C, which often causes no symptoms and can be passed between injected drug users, or people who have unprotected sex with a hepatitis C infected partner.

About 1.5 percent of the US population is infected with hepatitis C, making it one of the most common causes of [chronic liver disease](#) in the United States today, according to the US National Library of Medicine.

The disease can cause cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

Treatments to remove the virus from the blood include weekly injections of [pegylated interferon](#) alfa, and a twice daily capsule called Ribavirin. However there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.

Researchers said the shift in mortality rates is largely due to the success of treating HIV.

"The decrease in deaths from HIV infection in the past decades reflects the availability and utilization of highly effective therapies, as well as effective national implementation of programs for prevention and care," said the study.

"A similar approach to HBV and HCV prevention might lead to similar reductions in mortality from viral hepatitis over time."

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