

# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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## Increase in HIV cases in Kenora Area

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) has noted an increase in HIV cases in the Kenora area, particularly towards the end of 2022. Last year alone, there were nine confirmed cases reported in the Kenora area, while from 2013-2021 there were only eight confirmed cases reported. Testing and case/contact management is ongoing, and NWHU continues to monitor new cases.

The primary risk factors noted in this spike in new HIV cases are the sharing of needles and drug preparation equipment, and unprotected sex.

Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU explains, “HIV is an infection that can be spread a few ways, including by sharing injection drug use equipment and through unprotected sex with an HIV-infected individual. So far, we are seeing cases that fit into these risk categories”.

Dr. Young Hoon notes that interventions like the needle distribution program and condom use are key to preventing the spread of HIV. “With the long-standing higher rates of HIV in Manitoba and Thunder Bay, we have been anticipating an increase in HIV cases for over a decade. Key prevention strategies include consistent and proper condom use, as well as ensuring single use and no sharing of needles and drug preparation equipment.”

Although this spike in cases is a significant issue, it is important to note how HIV isn't spread. HIV is a virus that is spread through certain bodily fluids including blood, semen, vaginal, and anal fluids. HIV cannot be spread through casual contact (hugging, kissing), or through touching common surfaces such as those found in public washrooms.

If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, contact your health care provider or NWHU for testing.

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