Sioux Lookout
First Nations
Health Authority

COMMUNITY WELLBEING ADVISORY

To: Sioux Lookout area Chiefs and Health Directors
From: Dr. Lloyd Douglas, Public Health Physician, Approaches to Community Wellbeing (ACW), SLFNHA
Date: September 29, 2026
Re: **Increase in HIV Cases – Prevention and Testing Recommended**

ISSUE

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) has reported an increase in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) cases in Thunder Bay and District and is encouraging anyone who may be at risk to get tested.

Some of these cases involved people who met sexual partners through online dating or hook-up apps. Meeting new or multiple partners without using protection – like condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), or clean needles – can raise the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

This Community Wellbeing Advisory shares this information and offers practical recommendations to help reduce the risk of HIV in the Sioux Lookout area First Nations communities.

WHY TESTING AND PREVENTION MATTER

HIV is an infection that can be found in blood, semen, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. It is most commonly spread through anal or vaginal sex without a condom or by sharing needles or other equipment used to inject drugs.

HIV can affect anyone. Getting tested, knowing your HIV status, and using prevention options such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) are important ways to take control of your sexual health. HIV is preventable, and knowing your options can make a real difference.

Effective treatment is available for people living with HIV. When a person takes HIV treatment as prescribed and the amount of virus in their blood becomes undetectable, they cannot transmit HIV through sex. This is known as Undetectable = Untransmittable **(U=U)**. Regular HIV testing helps people know their status and make informed decisions about their health

WHO SHOULD GET TESTED?

Anyone who is sexually active, has a new or multiple sexual partners, or shares needles or other drug-use equipment should consider regular testing for HIV and other.

PrEP is a medicine that helps prevent HIV. It comes as a daily pill or a long-acting injection. When taken as prescribed, it lowers the risk of getting HIV through sex by about 99%. It does not protect against other STIs. PEP is an emergency medicine that can stop HIV after a possible exposure – it must be started within 72 hours. Speak with your healthcare provider or local nursing station about HIV and STI testing, and whether PrEP is right for you.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Get tested regularly

- Get tested for HIV and other STIs when you have a new partner, or every three months if you have multiple partners.
- Talk openly with your partners about HIV and STI testing and prevention.
- Ask a healthcare provider about PrEP.

- Use condoms and water-based lube every time you have sex, to help prevent HIV and other STIs, such as gonorrhea and syphilis.
- Use only clean, unused needles and drug-use equipment. Never reuse or share them.

If you think you have been exposed to HIV

Get PEP as soon as possible, and within 72 hours of a possible exposure. You can get PEP from a local emergency department, nursing station, or healthcare provider.

Where to get tested or learn more

Contact your local nursing station or healthcare provider for private HIV and STI testing, counselling, and referrals to other health and community services.

We thank all community workers, healthcare providers, and community members for their support in improving health and wellbeing of First Nations people in the Sioux Lookout area. Please share this information with community members to raise awareness and reduce the risk of HIV in your community.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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cc: Sonia Isaac Mann, Chief Executive Officer and President

SLFNHA Board of Directors

SLFNHA Chiefs Council on Health

Community Health Directors and Physicians

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