

November 2019 European Testing Week: Integrated testing of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections

European Testing Week (ETW) will be held on 22-29 November this year and will emphasise the importance of integrated testing of HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and sexually transmitted infections (when possible), as well as other related activities focused on increased awareness and access to testing and treatment, highlighting the importance of ETW's longstanding tagline of Test.Treat.Prevent.

HIV, hepatitis B (HBV) and C infection (HCV) remain critical public health concerns across Europe and Central Asia. Rates of [new HBV and HCV infections are high in Europe](#) and although the [number of new HIV diagnoses has slowed in the WHO European Region](#), there are still alarming rates of people newly diagnosed with HIV, especially within the Eastern region. The number of people unaware that they could be infected with one or multiple viruses remain high. Undiagnosed infections and late diagnosis of these conditions pose the potential risk of onward transmission, poorer health outcomes due to delays in treatment and increased health care costs.

Furthermore, to address the [increase of STIs throughout Europe](#), efforts have been made within ETW to increase awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly for chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis which have been on the [rise across Europe](#). Over the years, many ETW organisations have already taken the opportunity of ETW to raise the importance of testing for STIs, particularly since these occur in similar key populations and have similar modes of transmission.

ETW: building momentum around testing

Building on the established momentum of the initiative, ETW creates opportunities to use the week to create more awareness about the importance of testing for more than one condition (when possible). ETW recognises that legislative, financial and structural barriers may prohibit ETW participants in engaging in activities for other conditions, especially for conducting testing. However, ETW encourages the network to recognise the importance of integration and consider developing ways, big and small, to further *inform* target audiences about the importance of prevention, testing and treatment for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs, as well as tuberculosis, despite significant limitations in the available tools for testing outside of specialised laboratories. Lack of information/awareness about these conditions may contribute to stigmatising behaviour and keep persons at-risk distant from current testing responses, and a more active effort of taking integrated testing to those in need, especially key populations around Europe, is a critical step to control these infections as public health issues.

European Testing Week calls upon its network of NGOs/CSOs, health care facilities, government organisations and other stakeholders to strengthen the response to HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs, and pledge to engage in [integrated testing and other related activities](#) (when possible) for the November 2019 European Testing Week.

The importance of integrated testing

The focus on integrated testing ties into the 2018 European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) public health guidance which advocates [integrated HIV and viral hepatitis](#) testing and efforts in Europe including the [Integrate Joint Action](#), the [biennial HepHIV Conference](#), and the EU policy framework on HIV/AIDS, TB and hepatitis.

ETW recognises the importance of identifying and meeting the diverse and varying needs of those who access testing services, especially key populations.¹ By using an integrated approach, efforts can use the opportunities granted by ETW to help lessen missed opportunities for testing and provide more coverage for people who do not normally access health services.

Integrated testing and other related activities (including raising integrated testing awareness, training and education of health care workers on screening for more than one condition, advocating for legislation to support integrated testing, etc.) should depend on the local epidemiology of these conditions and how they overlap within key populations. Some examples of populations that could benefit from integrated testing and other related activities include, but is not limited to the following:

- People in prisons or closed settings may benefit from integrated HIV and viral hepatitis testing (guidance from [ECDC/EMCDDA](#) and [supported by ETW](#))
- Routine HIV and STI testing for MSM in sexual health services ([guidance from ECDC, 2015](#))
- Screening for tuberculosis, HIV and viral hepatitis of newly arrived migrants ([guidance from ECDC, 2018](#))
- Antenatal screening for HIV, HBV and syphilis during pregnancy ([guidance from ECDC, 2017](#))

How can you learn more about HIV, viral hepatitis and/or STIs?

A new ETW STI Factsheet has been developed to help inform about the importance of STI testing and all of the ETW materials will be updated to reflect the latest scientific evidence on HIV and viral hepatitis.

For more information, read the [Why get involved?](#) page on the ETW website or check out materials shared by other ETW participants on our [Shared Materials](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. Check back on the [ETW materials](#) to access the new and updated materials coming soon.

Additional resources:

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Public health guidance in brief on HIV, hepatitis B and C testing in the EU/EEA – An integrated approach](#). Stockholm: ECDC; 2018.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Hepatitis B](#). In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.

¹ Key and main-affected groups to consider for targeted services should include people who use drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), trans* people, prisoners, uninsured persons and migrants, including undocumented migrants, mobile and displaced populations.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Hepatitis C](#). In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Chlamydia infection](#). In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Gonorrhoea](#). In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [Syphilis](#). In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.

International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI): [Guidelines](#) and [patient information](#).