# HEPATITIS C and GBMSM

## HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HCV) IS A LIVER-ATTACKING VIRUS THAT CAN LEAD TO CIRRHOSIS AND LIVER CANCER IF UNTREATED.

### TRANSMISSION:

- HCV primarily spreads through blood-to-blood contact, with sexual fluids potentially transmitting the virus. Sharing drug use items, tattoo equipment, razors, and sex toys increases risk.

- Vulnerable and marginalized groups for HCV include gbMSM, especially those with multiple partners, HIV, hepatitis B, those taking PrEP, and those engaging in PnP and/or certain sexual activities (e.g. fisting, group sex)

### OFTEN ASYMPTOMATIC:

- Early HCV infections often lack symptoms; if symptoms are present, they may include nausea, vomiting, jaundice, dark urine, and pain under the ribs.

### TESTING:

- Healthcare providers may not automatically test for HCV, especially if they are unaware of vulnerable factors you may have for acquiring it (see "Transmission" and "Vulnerable and marginalized groups" above).

- HCV testing usually involves a blood test for antibodies and may include other tests.

### PREVENTION AND HYGIENE:

- Regular self-checks, proper cleaning of sex toys, using condoms, and not sharing sex or drug use items can reduce HCV transmission risk.

### TREATMENT:

- Direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) effectively treat and cure HCV in 95% of cases, with personalized treatment plans based on various health factors.

- Monitoring Liver Health in patients with HCV includes regular blood tests and scans; these tests are done less frequently after successful treatment.

### PARTY AND PLAY (PNP) RISKS:

- Substance use during sex, especially methamphetamine, poppers, and ketamine, can increase HCV risk for a number of possible reasons.

### STIGMA AND SUPPORT:

- Open, sex-positive conversations with healthcare providers about diverse sexual practices and preventive measures can empower gbMSM to manage their sexual health effectively.

**GMSH**
GAY MEN'S SEXUAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

Sexual health and hepatitis C testing, care, and treatment for gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (gbMSM)