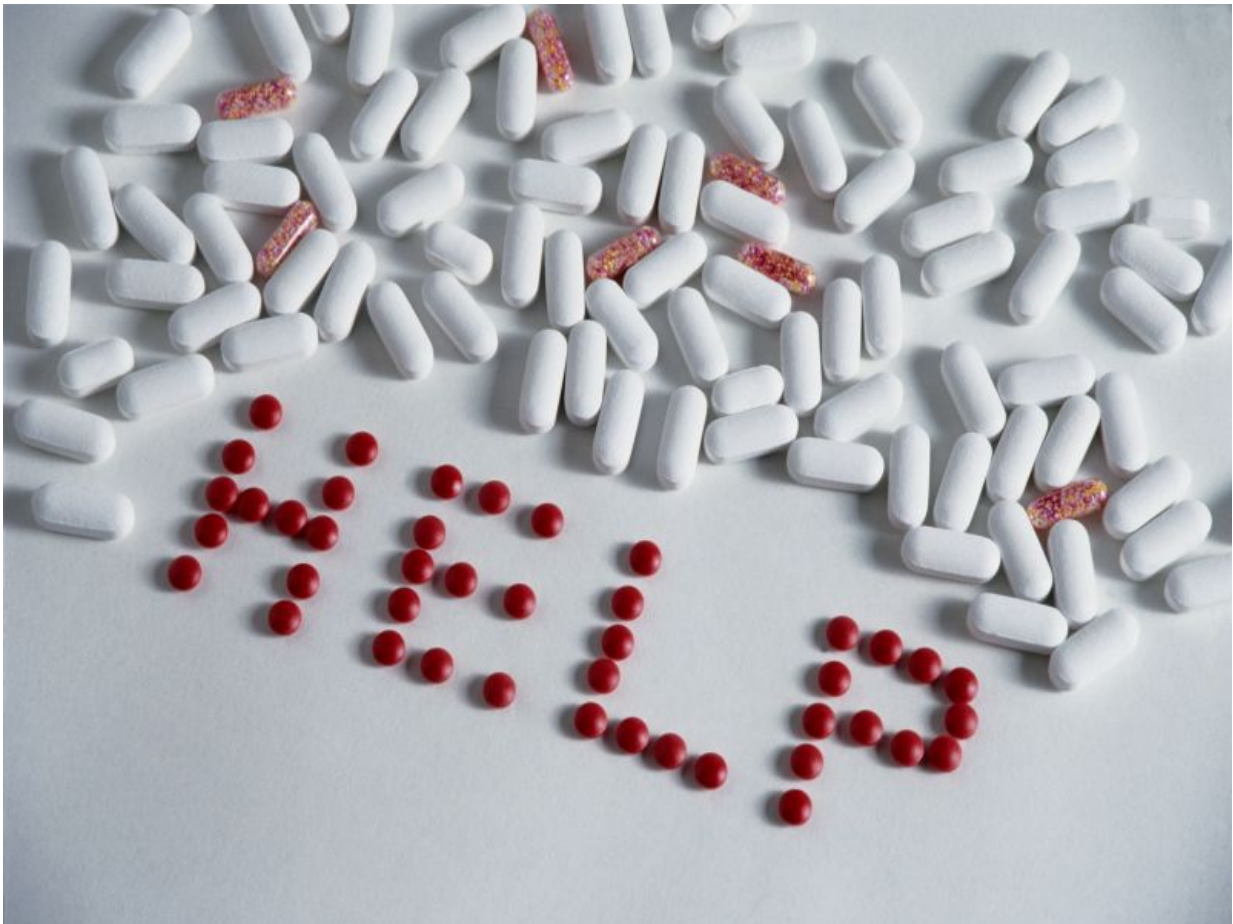


Sharing drug 'Snorting straws' spreads hepatitis C

July 28 2016



(HealthDay)—Sharing straws to snort opioids is a major cause of

hepatitis C infection, a new study finds.

The sharing of snorting straws could also lead to the transmission of other blood-borne diseases such as HIV, the AIDS-causing virus, the University of Tennessee Medical Center researchers warned.

"This is a worldwide issue that needs to be addressed," study leader Dr. Craig Towers, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist, said in a university news release.

"The idea that 'if you snort, don't share straws' needs to be communicated around the globe as the use of snorting straws for drug use is a common practice, especially for those that prefer that method over intravenous drug use," he said.

The researchers surveyed 189 pregnant [women](#) in eastern Tennessee who were infected with hepatitis C virus. Pregnant women were chosen for the study because they're highly likely to use [health care services](#).

Seventy percent of the women said they did not know how they became infected with hepatitis C, and nearly that many learned they were infected through routine prenatal testing.

Ninety-two percent of the women said they had shared snorting straws, according to the study in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

"Nearly all participants reported that opiates were the primary drug that was snorted," said Towers. He said the study supports previous reports of the overwhelming existence of an "opioid epidemic," especially in Appalachia.

"The main concern is the transmission of any blood-borne virus, but a huge potential impact of the sharing of snorting utensils is the threat of

transmitting HIV, which is more serious than [hepatitis C]. If HIV were to enter the blood pool of this population, an increase in this serious infection might also develop," Towers said.

"This risk needs to be communicated to the public and the health care community," he said.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more on [hepatitis C](#).

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Citation: Sharing drug 'Snorting straws' spreads hepatitis C (2016, July 28) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-07-drug-snorting-straws-hepatitis.html>

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