



**Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
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Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
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**Deputy Charles Ward,
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2**

9th April, 2025

PQ: 17693/25 To ask the Minister for Health if she will provide an update on the hepatitis C home testing kits; the number of kits that have been dispatched; if this scheme is proving successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Charles Ward.

Dear Charles Ward,

I refer to your parliamentary question, which was passed to the HSE for response.

The HSE established the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme (NHCTP) in 2015 and began providing treatment for hepatitis C using Direct-Acting Antivirals (DAAs) to patients prioritised based on clinical need. Since 2016, the HSE has committed, through its National Service Plans, to implementing a multi-annual public health strategy for the treatment of hepatitis C.

It is estimated that at least 50–60% of people in Ireland who have hepatitis C are unaware of their diagnosis. Therefore, to achieve the goal of making hepatitis C a rare disease by 2026, the Programme has shifted its focus toward identifying the affected population and case finding.

Achieving this goal requires the identification and treatment of the most chronically infected individuals in the community. In this context, a publicly funded Hepatitis C home testing kit was launched on 5 April 2023, accompanied by a proactive media campaign to promote the service and raise awareness about hepatitis C and the importance of getting tested and treated.

To date, 10,794 of home testing kits have been dispatched. Individuals with positive results have confirmatory testing arranged by the Hepatitis C specialist nurses in St Vincent's University Hospital. If active infection is confirmed the patients are fast-tracked to curative treatment. To date approximately 17% of individuals with antibodies to hepatitis C have confirmed active infection. This is compared to historical rates of approximately 70%. The results are similar to the results of recent epidemiological studies carried out by the program and suggest that Ireland is on track to achieve the WHO elimination goals.

To our knowledge, Ireland is the first country to introduce a publicly funded home testing service for hepatitis C. This initiative forms part of a multipronged effort to 'test and treat' hard-to-reach populations and underpins our commitment to eliminating hepatitis C as a public health threat. The referral pathway is functioning smoothly, and patient feedback has been positive. The program recently enhanced the home



testing service by offering optional blood tests for hepatitis B and HIV and an optional oral salivary test for hepatitis C.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts**