

## Sexually transmitted co-infections increase HIV risk: study

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(Medical Xpress) -- Bacterial and viral sexually transmitted infections can exacerbate HIV replication in co-infected individuals, a team of Canadian researchers led by Charu Kaushic, associate professor of pathology and molecular medicine, has found.

"While sexually transmitted infections are associated with increased HIV-1 susceptibility and viral shedding in the genital tract, the mechanisms underlying this association are poorly understood," said Kaushic about the study that appears online this month in the [Journal of Infectious Diseases](#). "Our research has found that normal response to these infections by the epithelial cells (the cells that line the genital tract) can lead to increased [HIV replication](#) in the [female reproductive tract](#)."

Through this study, Victor Ferreira, a graduate student in Kaushic's lab revealed how bacterial (gonorrhoea) and viral ([genital herpes](#)) sexually transmitted infections can increase HIV replication in co-infected individuals, opening new doors of understanding.

"Clinical studies have clearly shown that co-infection with herpes and gonorrhoea makes HIV infection worse and large trials have been conducted to study if controlling these infections can make [HIV infection](#) less invasive and less transmissible," says Kaushic, a member of McMaster's Institute for Infectious Disease Research.

"The benefit of treating co-infections has not been as impressive as was expected, and this study increases our understanding of why that might

be. We discovered that inflammation plays a key role in HIV replication. It's not necessary that if you control those infections, the inflammation is gone. So it might be useful, that in addition to treating these co-infections with antibiotics or antivirals, to control the inflammation and this might be more effective in stopping HIV replication rather than controlling just the infection."

Provided by McMaster University

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