Using e-mail services to keep up-to-date with HIV and hepatitis C

By Erica Lee

Keeping up-to-date with new developments in HIV and hepatitis C can be as easy as checking your e-mail. Electronic bulletins and alerts, offered by numerous organizations, send the latest news and research right to your inbox.

E-mail news bulletins

E-mail news bulletins gather current and notable news and events from different sources and share them with you in quick, easy to digest summaries. They save you the trouble of having to search for those key stories yourself, and can be delivered as often as every day or week, or less frequently, such as once a month.

Each news service has a different focus and covers different topics and can be a great way to learn about new research, current events, and tools and resources. Signing up for these free e-mail news services is as simple as providing and verifying your e-mail address. The news services offered by the following HIV and hepatitis C organizations can be trusted not to open up your inbox to spam e-mails:

- **CATIE** – Subscribe to CATIE’s research summary bulletins, including CATIE News, HepCInfo Updates, and TreatmentUpdate, to learn more about the latest in HIV and hepatitis C prevention and treatment. Subscribe to The CATIE Exchange, to learn more about new HIV and hepatitis C resources and initiatives offered by Canadian organizations. [English and French]
- **NAM** – NAM is a British organization whose bulletins include HIV Weekly, a regular digest of HIV-related news, as well as stories on hepatitis C. Subscribe to receive an ongoing bulletin, or to receive NAM’s reporting during key conferences like the International AIDS Conference. Conference reporting is available in different languages, including French. [English and French]
- **U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Prevention Information Network** – The CDC Prevention News Update is a daily bulletin of news on HIV, hepatitis C, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis. Current events coverage includes news from the United States, as well as international news. To subscribe, you’ll need to create an account and then choose “Prevention News Daily Update” from the option list. [English]
- **HIVandhepatitis.com** – HIVandhepatitis.com is a website that highlights news on the prevention and treatment of HIV, hepatitis C and hepatitis B. The HIVandhepatitis.com e-newsletter provides ongoing notice of the news being added to the website. [English]
- **The Body** – Signing up for bulletins at the HIV website The Body will subscribe you to two e-mail newsletters. News and Views highlights news stories from different sources and recent articles and blog postings from The Body website. Hot Topics at TheBody.com’s Ask the Experts Forums features recent question-and-answer posts from The Body’s online forums. [English]
- **Crips Ile-de-France** – The French association Crips Ile-de-France produces the newsletter actuvih in partnership with the HIV website vih.org. Sign up for actuvih to receive news on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections. [French]
Table-of-contents alerts

If you’d rather get research straight from the source, table-of-contents alerts let you know when journals publish new research articles. You can sign up for table-of-contents alerts through journal publisher websites where you’ll usually have to create a free account first.

Tables of contents are released whenever a new journal issue is published, which can be weekly, monthly, quarterly or less frequently. You can also sign up for advance or early publication notices that let you know when articles have been accepted and published online before appearing in an upcoming issue. Advance-access alerts will come whenever the journal has content to share.

Table-of-contents alerts are a great way to learn about the release of new research, but they don’t give you full access to articles. Unless an article is available for free, without a journal subscription or paying for the article you can usually only read the abstract. Journals with research on HIV and hepatitis C prevention include:

- AIDS
- *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes (JAIDS)*
- AIDS Education and Prevention
- AIDS and Behavior
- Harm Reduction Journal

Automated search alerts

For a more customized kind of e-mail service, you can set up an automated search alert. An automated search alert will run an online search you’ve created at regular intervals to find and send you the most recently posted results on your topic.

Online article databases are a great place to set up automated searches. PubMed, a huge database maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, is a great tool for finding research articles from health-related journals. To create an automated search alert in PubMed, you need to create a free account first. From there, you will be able to save your searches and choose to have new results e-mailed to you. You can also choose how frequently you’d like to receive search-result updates – monthly, weekly, or daily.

Another source for automated search alerts is Google Scholar. It searches for scholarly literature, including research articles, which can be found on the websites of publishers, universities, professional societies and other online sources. After running a search using Google Scholar, create an alert for your search to get ongoing e-mails with new search results. You can also change the settings in Google Scholar to search in French and other languages.

As with any kind of database or online search, the better your combination of search terms, the more accurate and relevant your search results will be. Check out the *Prevention in Focus* article on tips on how to create a successful search strategy. Like table-of-contents alerts, unless an article is freely available online, PubMed and Google Scholar do not provide access to full articles.

Keeping on top of your e-mail bulletins and alerts

Setting up e-mail bulletins and alerts is one thing, but finding the time to read them all is another. Keeping up with all the information you’re receiving can seem daunting but it’s not impossible. Try some of these strategies for staying on top of your e-mails:

- **Make keeping up-to-date part of your routine** – Spend the first 15 minutes of every work day reviewing your e-mail bulletins, no excuses. You can always follow up on really interesting news later, but at least take the time to find out what those important stories are.
- **Create a separate e-mail folder for your bulletins and alerts** – Set up an e-mail rule that delivers your bulletins and alerts directly to a separate folder and not your inbox. This will reduce your inbox clutter and keep all your bulletins together in one place for easy access and future reference.
- **Mix and match different bulletins and alerts** – Different e-mail services focus on different types of news and use different sources. The opposite can also be true and you may find some overlap in the stories covered by each service. Find the combination of services that gives the right mix of news for you and unsubscribe to
any that you don’t find useful.

- **Control how often you receive bulletins and alerts** – Some services allow you to choose how frequently you receive e-mails. If getting e-mails once a day is too frequent, check if there’s an option to group all your alerts together in a weekly or monthly digest. Or, if monthly e-mails are too long and hard to get through, see if you can break your e-mails up into smaller, more manageable weekly chunks.

- **Share the load** – If you have co-workers and other colleagues interested in the same topics as you, divide the task of monitoring bulletins and alerts and share what you learn with each other.

The bottom line is to find a system that fits your workload and habits. Keeping up-to-date is meant to help, not hinder, your prevention work. With the right strategy, a little investment of time will be well worth the new information and knowledge you will gain.

**About the author(s)**

**Erica Lee** is the Information Specialist at CATIE. Since earning her Master of Information Studies, Erica has worked in the health library field, supporting the information needs of frontline service providers and service users. Before joining CATIE, Erica worked as the Librarian at the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT).
Disclaimer

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV- and hepatitis C-related illness and the treatments in question.

CATIE provides information resources to help people living with HIV and/or hepatitis C who wish to manage their own health care in partnership with their care providers. Information accessed through or published or provided by CATIE, however, is not to be considered medical advice. We do not recommend or advocate particular treatments and we urge users to consult as broad a range of sources as possible. We strongly urge users to consult with a qualified medical practitioner prior to undertaking any decision, use or action of a medical nature.

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Production of this content has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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