

# Hepatitis C

## A person should be offered testing for hepatitis C if they have:

- Any risk factors identified
- Unexplained elevated LFTs and/or enzymes, specifically ALT

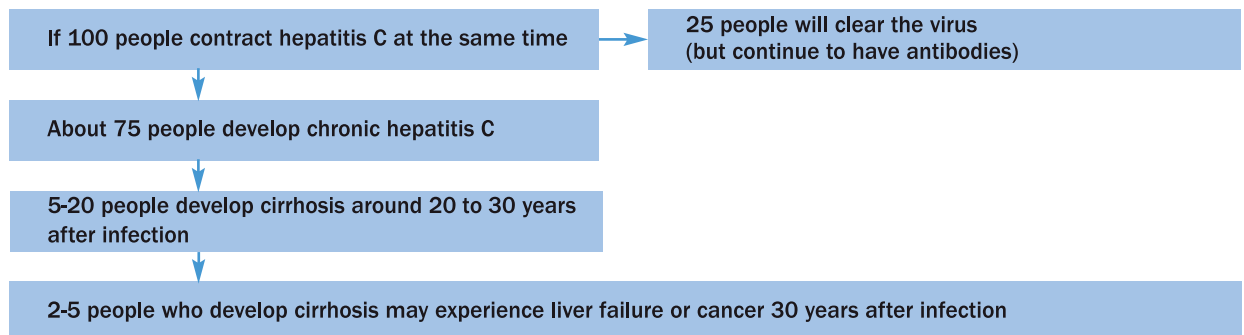
### Risk Factors

- Injecting drug use (IDU) (past or present).
- Transfusion of blood or blood products before 1990.
- Unhygienic tattoos & body piercing.
- History of incarceration.
- Occupational exposures e.g. needle stick injuries.
- Exposure of baby to infected mother at delivery.
- Medical/dental procedures in regions with high hepatitis C prevalence or unhygienic conditions.
- Sexual activity where blood is present (particularly when there is an existing STI).

### Fast Facts

- Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus.
- Hepatitis C is not regarded as a sexually transmissible infection in Australia.
- There are at least six different genotypes or strains of hepatitis C. Genotype is the most important predictor of response to treatment.
- The risk of transmission from mother to baby is approximately 6% where the mother is hepatitis C PCR positive. Babies should not be tested for hepatitis C until they are 18 months of age.
- Hepatitis C positive mothers can breastfeed unless nipples are cracked or bleeding.
- The seroconversion 'window period' ranges from two to twenty-six weeks, during which time antibodies cannot be detected.
- There is currently no vaccine available to protect against hepatitis C.

### Natural History



### Counselling

#### Counselling assists with obtaining informed consent before testing.

Pre-test counselling and post-test counselling should include:

- Assessment of the patient's risk factors and the likelihood of a positive result.
- An outline of the management of hepatitis C including monitoring, antiviral therapy and lifestyle changes.
- Education for the reduction of risk of hepatitis C transmission.
- Confirmation that confidentiality will be respected.
- Explanation that a positive result is notified to the Department of Human Services.

### Testing For Hepatitis C

If HCV Ab (hepatitis C antibodies) positive additional testing should include:

- Liver function test (especially ALT)
- HCV-RNA by PCR
- HBsAg and anti-HAV
- HIV antibody (with informed consent)

## Treatment

- Treatment with pegylated interferon and ribavirin is successful in clearing the virus in 50-80 % of people with hepatitis C, (depending on genotype). There are eligibility criteria to meet to receive this combination therapy under the government subsidised scheme (\$100) in recognised liver clinics.
- Hep A and B vaccination should be offered to reduce the risk of infection that could result in further liver damage.

## Who to Refer

- Any patients who are HCV RNA positive or of unknown RNA status.
- Note that current injecting drug users may be eligible for treatment.

## Support and education

### Direct Line

Drug & alcohol counselling and NSP  
Free call: 1800 888 236

### Haemophilia Foundation Victoria

Telephone: 03 9555 7595

### Hepatitis C Council of Victoria

Telephone: 03 93804644  
Free call: 1800 703003

### Hepatitis Helpline (Telephone Counselling)

Telephone: 03 9349 1111  
Freecall: 1800 800 241

### Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

Telephone: 03 9347 0244  
Free call: 1800 032 017

### Multilingual Hepatitis C Resources

(18 languages)  
[www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au](http://www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au)

### The HIV, Hepatitis & STI Education and Resource Centre

Telephone: 03 9276 6993

### Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

Telephone: 03 9419 3350

### Victorian Viral Hepatitis Educator

Telephone: 03 9288 3586

### VIVAIDS

(Victorian Drug Users Organisation)  
Telephone 03 9329 1500

## Specialist Services

**Assessment and treatment is available at the following specialised clinics.**

### Alfred Hospital - Hepatitis Clinic

(also clinic in Cheltenham)  
Telephone: 03 9276 2223

### Infectious Diseases Clinic

Telephone: 03 9276 6081

### Austin Hospital

Telephone: 03 9496 2787

### Bairnsdale

Telephone: 03 5150 3478

### Ballarat Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 5320 4322

### Box Hill Hospital - Hepatitis/Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 9895 3353

### Frankston - Peninsula Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 9781 4434

### Footscray - Western Hospital - Hepatitis Clinic

Telephone: 03 8345 6490

### Geelong Hospital - Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 5226 7111

### Knox Private Hepatitis Clinic

Telephone: 03 9210 7300

### Maroondah Hospital - Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 9496 2787

### Monash Medical Centre - Liver Clinic (also Cranbourne and Springvale)

Telephone: 03 95943088

### Northern Hospital - Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 9219 8760

### Royal Melbourne Hospital

Victorian Infectious Diseases Service  
Telephone: 03 9342 7212

### St Kilda - Barkly St Medical Centre

Telephone: 03 9534 0531

### St Vincent's Hospital - Hepatitis Clinic

Telephone: 03 9288 3580

### Werribee Liver Clinic

Telephone: 03 9216 8633

### Wodonga Hepatitis C Treatment Centre

Telephone: 02 6056 3366

## Department of Human Services Notification Of Infectious Disease form

(hepatitis C is a group B notifiable disease) [http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/downloads/nid\\_form.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/downloads/nid_form.pdf)