

# Hepatitis C treatment

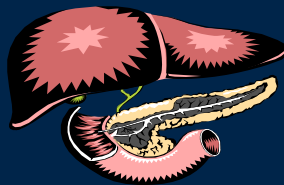
## What to expect.

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## What's hepatitis?

*Hepatitis* means inflammation of the liver



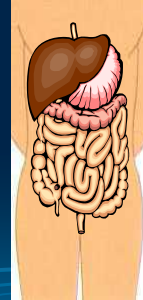
Causes include:

- alcohol
- chemicals
- some medications
- congenital , auto-immune diseases (rare)
- **most commonly caused by viruses**

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## Where is the liver located?

- Located under the rib cage on the upper right quadrant
- Largest internal organ of the body
- It has the ability to regenerate



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## Why Is The Liver So Important?

- **Filter** – helps remove alcohol and other toxic substances from the body
- **Processes** – hormones & medications so the body can use them effectively
- **Stores** – sugars, fats and vitamins (eg A, B12, D, E, K, iron & copper)
- **Metabolises** - carbohydrates, proteins & lipids
- **Produces** - clotting factors
- **Chemical power plant** – converts food into stored energy & chemicals

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## Transmission

- **Transfusion of blood or blood products in Australia before Feb 1990.**
- **Unsterile tattooing or body piercing**
- **Infected mother to baby ( low risk )**
- **Unsterile medical procedures.**
- **Sharing razors ,toothbrushes with an infected person**
- **Unsafe injecting drug use ,contaminated equipment ( high risk ),accounting for 91% of all new infections.**

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## Give me one good reason...

- **An opportunity to cure a chronic condition.**
- **Improved liver structure and function.**
- **HIV/ Hepatitis C co-infection.**
- **Improved quality of life.**

## Symptoms

- Fatigue; restrictions on lifestyle
- Nausea; poor appetite; altered digestion
- Pain or discomfort over the liver
- Depression and/ or anxiety
- Malaise, loss of the feeling of well being.

## Treatment Goals

Improve survival = primary aim

- ↓ progression to cirrhosis
- ↓ the likelihood of liver cancer

Histological improvement

- Biochemical improvement

- Hepatitis treatment is available through many centres in New South Wales.
- People with haemophilia would need to access their treatment in a liver clinic within a large teaching hospital.
- Access to a multidisciplinary team

## **OK, I'M READY NOW !**

- Choosing the right time is important.
- Work-up – can take time.
- Education- getting all the information you need.
- Treatment waiting lists
- Committing to treatment

## Treatment

The length of treatment is determined by the genotype.

Genotypes 2 and 3 without fibrosis = 24 weeks.

Genotypes 2 and 3 with adv fibrosis /cirrhosis = 48 wks.

Genotypes 1,4 and 6 = 48 weeks.

Co-infection with HIV ,Geno 1,4 and 6 may need 72 weeks.

2/3 of Haemophiliacs predominately Genotype 1b.

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## Combination Therapy

- Pegylated interferon– weekly injection and ribavirin tablets twice daily.
- available on PBS for people who are eligible
- Treatment success rates between 50% and 80 % depending on genotype.

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## Ribavirin

Ribavirin can cause serious birth defects in the foetus.

- A man's partner must not be pregnant or become pregnant whilst on treatment.
- A woman must not be pregnant or become pregnant whilst on treatment
- Those on treatment and their partners must use two forms of contraception, one for each partner both during treatment and for 6 months after treatment

## Side effects

- Individuals experience side effects differently
- Some may experience a few
- Some may experience many
- Severity may vary

## Side effects

- Flu-like symptoms
- Chills
- Myalgia
- Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue/tiredness



## Side effects

- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Difficulty managing BGL's if diabetic
- Diarrhoea



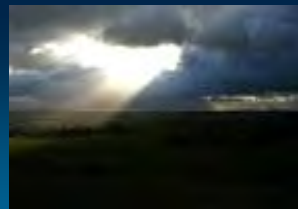
## Side effects

- Skin reactions
- Localised reaction around injection site
- Minor or major dermatological reactions
- Hair loss



## Side effects

- Insomnia
- Decreased libido



## Side effects

- Mental health issues
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Aggression
- Depression/suicidal thoughts
- Suicide



## Side effects

- Blood disorders
- Neutropaenia
- Thrombocytopaenia
- Anaemia
- Abnormal thyroid function



## In the meantime what can be done to improve general health and the liver?

- Avoid alcohol /stay within the recommended guidelines
- Try to reduce or give up smoking
- Eat a healthy diet- avoid saturated fats.
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise within your capabilities
- Immunity to Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B – ask your GP for screening and be vaccinated if needed
- Minimise stress, rest when you need to, be kind to yourself

## Disclosure

- Generally speaking, no disclosure of hepatitis C is required except to the Blood Bank and Life Insurance applications
- People are not required to disclose their hep C status for infection control purposes
- Most people don't have to tell their employer unless they are healthcare workers involved in "exposure-prone procedures" or are in the Australian Defence Force
- ***It may be against the law if an employer, workmate or service provider discloses someone's HCV/HIV status without their permission.***

## Hepatitis C Services

- State-wide services - information and support

Website: [www.hep.org.au](http://www.hep.org.au)

- Hep C Helpline

Sydney Callers: (02) 9332 1599

NSW Regional Callers: 1800 803 990

- Multicultural HIV/AIDS Hepatitis C Service

Phone: (02) 9515 5030

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

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## Heplink

- state wide interagency
- networking
- information and resource sharing
- face to face meetings and email component

- How to join?

Hepatitis NSW [www.hep.org.au](http://www.hep.org.au)

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**Do you have any Questions?**

