



World Hepatitis Day May 19
Hepatitis Awareness Week May 19 - May 25

HEP C 123

1. Take Control
2. Health Check
3. Know your status

Hepatitis C: information for people with bleeding disorders

ABOUT HEPATITIS C

Many people with bleeding disorders who were treated with plasma derived clotting factor concentrates before these products were inactivated for Hepatitis C virus (HCV) were exposed to hepatitis C.

- Some people clear hepatitis C naturally from their blood, although they will still have HCV antibodies in their blood to show they have come in contact with hepatitis C

To tell whether you still have hepatitis C virus in your blood, you would need to have an HCV RNA PCR test

- Other people go on to develop chronic hepatitis C, which can cause liver damage in some people
- There are 6 main genotypes (strains) of hepatitis C virus. Genotype 3 seems to respond better to treatment than genotype 1

If you do not know your genotype and are interested in treatment, talk to your doctor about an HCV genotype test.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEALTH

- Regular checks on your liver health if you have hepatitis C can help you to maintain or improve your health
- Even when you are feeling well there may be some damage occurring to your liver.

Speak to your Haemophilia Centre or hepatitis clinic about useful tests to check the health of your liver

Other things to do to look after your health

Stress management

Have a healthy diet

Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, or give up alcohol

Make sure you get enough rest or sleep.

TREATMENT

- Current recommended medical treatment for hepatitis C is pegylated interferon and ribavirin. It has had much better results than earlier treatments. In Australia a number of people with bleeding disorders have cleared hepatitis C with treatment
- People who are co-infected with hepatitis C and HIV are encouraged to discuss treatment for their hepatitis C with their HIV specialist. This could help to prevent liver damage and to tolerate HIV drugs better.

If you have any questions about treatment, speak to your Haemophilia Centre or hepatitis clinic.

LIVING WITH HEPATITIS C

- You do not have to tell anyone about your hepatitis C unless you want to. Some circumstances require you to disclose, but you can avoid these situations if you wish
- It is against the law to discriminate against someone because they have hepatitis C
- If hepatitis C is preventing you from working, you may have entitlements regarding Centrelink payments, superannuation and disability insurance.

For more information, talk to your Haemophilia Social Worker/Counsellor or local Hepatitis C Council.

AVOIDING PASSING ON HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C virus is carried in the blood. Reduce opportunities for other people to come in contact with your blood.

Precautions for every household or workplace whether people have hepatitis C or not:

- Where you can, clean up your own blood accidents. Wear disposable gloves when you clean up other people's blood accidents. Wipe up blood with paper towels, then scrub the area with good quality detergent or bleach and cold water
- Cover any cuts, abrasions or wounds with waterproof dressings
- Don't share personal toiletry items that could puncture skin and carry small amounts of blood, eg toothbrushes, razors, tweezers, nail files, nail scissors
- Put bloodstained personal items such as bandaids, tampons, sanitary napkins and dressings inside two plastic bags and then in the rubbish bin.

The risk of passing on hepatitis C during sex is very small. It is uncertain whether this increases if you also have HIV. In a new relationship, follow safe sex practices, eg using a condom, to protect both partners against sexually transmissible infections such as herpes or chlamydia.

The risk of passing hepatitis C on from mother to baby during pregnancy is very low, about 5 per cent.

Hepatitis C prevention messages for all Australians:

- Health care workers should follow standard infection control procedures with all patients
- Injecting drug equipment should not be shared
- If you get a tattoo, make sure the tattooist doesn't reuse needles, dye and dye tubs and uses new disposable gloves for each client
- Follow the 'blood rules' in sport (leave the ground when bleeding, stop the bleeding, dress the wound, clean up the blood, use gloves to handle blood).

If you have any questions about transmitting hepatitis C, speak to your doctor.

This fact sheet is a summary of *Hepatitis C: information for people with bleeding disorders - No. 1* published by Haemophilia Foundation Australia in February 2007

Important Note: This fact sheet was developed by Haemophilia Foundation Australia for education and information purposes only and does not replace advice from a treating health professional. Always see your health care provider for assessment and advice about your individual health before taking action or relying on published information.

© Haemophilia Foundation Australia 2008. This fact sheet may be printed or photocopied for educational purposes.