

# HEPATITIS C

What you need to know

## GET IN CONTACT

hepqld.asn.au  
Infoline: 1800 437 222



## Once I'm cured of hepatitis C, can I get it again?

You can have hepatitis C more than once

Yes. Being cured of hepatitis C won't protect you from getting hepatitis C again.

To prevent reinfection take steps to avoid blood-to-blood contact. For example, always use clean injecting and tattooing equipment.

If you know others who may have hepatitis C, consider getting tested or treated together.

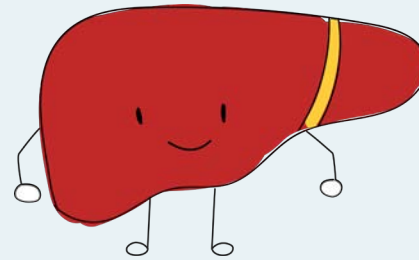
As a general guide, get tested every 12 months if you have any exposure to activities that put you at risk of hepatitis C.

## More information

Contact Hepatitis Queensland on 1800 437 222 or visit our website at [www.hepqld.asn.au](http://www.hepqld.asn.au) for more information on hepatitis C and to find local hepatitis C services.

### Further support

- Your doctor
- Aboriginal Medical Services
- Queensland Injectors Health Network (QIHN)
- Kombi Clinic
- Alcohol and Other Drug Services
- Sexual Health Clinics



Our vision is to see an end to viral hepatitis



## What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (or hep C) is a virus that causes inflammation and damage to your liver.

If left untreated, hepatitis C can cause long term liver disease, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer.

**Hepatitis C can be cured!**

## How do you get hepatitis C?

To get hepatitis C, the blood of a hepatitis C positive person must enter your bloodstream (blood-to-blood contact).

You may have come into contact with hepatitis C if you have ever:

- Shared injecting drug equipment (including needles, syringes, tourniquets, water, filters or spoons), or been injected by someone else
- Had a backyard/prison tattoo or piercing
- Had a needle stick injury
- Received a blood transfusion overseas or in Australia before 1990
- Had an overseas dental or medical procedure

## What are the symptoms?

As many as 80% of people who have hepatitis C will have no symptoms. Even if you feel well, it is important to get a hepatitis C test if you think you have come into contact with the virus.

If you do experience symptoms, these may include:

**Tiredness**

**General aches & pains**

**Loss of appetite**

**Jaundice**  
(yellowing of the skin and eyes)

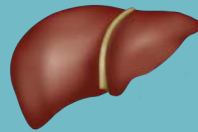
**Nausea**

**Brain fog or confusion**

## Stages of the disease

Hepatitis C has ongoing stages that refer to the amount of damage to the liver.

If your liver has been badly damaged, scar tissue (also called fibrosis) builds up and stops the liver from working properly.



### Healthy Liver

No damage



### Fibrosis

Scarring of the liver tissue



### Cirrhosis

Very scarred, this can lead to liver cancer or liver failure

## How do I get tested for hepatitis C?

You will need to have a blood test or fingerstick test (also known as a point-of-care test) to check if you have the hepatitis C virus.

Your doctor (GP) or health clinic can give you a referral for a hepatitis C (HCV) blood test. Some sexual health clinics, alcohol and other drugs services (AODS) and needle and syringe programs (NSPs) offer on-site testing.

## Hepatitis C can be cured!

Treatment to cure hepatitis C is available from your doctor or health clinic. If your liver has been badly damaged you may be referred to a specialist or liver clinic for treatment.

Most people can be **cured** of hepatitis C by taking tablets daily for 8 to 12 weeks.

Hepatitis C treatments:

- Give you at least a 95% chance of being cured
- Have little to no side effects
- Are just tablets (no injections)
- Can be covered by Medicare, so are very low cost

## How do I find a doctor?

You can talk to your local doctor (GP), Aboriginal Medical Service or Sexual Health Clinic about getting tested and treated for hepatitis C.

You can also search Hepatitis Queensland's HEPnav directory at [www.hepnav.com.au](http://www.hepnav.com.au) to find local hepatitis C services or call our Infoline on 1800 437 222.

