

BE FREE FROM C

Getting treated on the outside...



GETTING RID OF HEP C IS EASIER THAN EVER!

This booklet is a step-by step-guide to hep C treatment on the outside.

Even though treatment can be done inside prison now, sometimes there isn't time to get it done before you leave prison. This booklet is so you know exactly what to do next to get cured. There are clinics now especially for people who have been in prison or who have injected drugs.

Everyone with hep C can get cured now:

- ✔ you can get cured if you are using drugs
- ✔ you can get cured if you drink alcohol
- ✔ you can get cured if you have been in prison
- ✔ you can get cured if you have nowhere to live

66 *Lose the virus not your lifestyle* 99



what goes on in prison stays in prison right?

“Well if you have hep C it doesn’t stay in prison – it comes right out with you!

But it doesn’t have to stay with you – there are cures now that we can all get hold of!

We can all get hold of! And they don’t have the side effects like the old ones. It only knocks the virus on its arse, not you!

I’ve done the treatment and I’m happy I did.

Even though I couldn’t feel my hep, I knew it could cause cancer so I did something about it.

I hope this booklet helps you do something about it too!”

- Gerry

Every Journey starts with a single step

STEP 1 FIND A HEP C TREATMENT CENTRE

1800 703 033



Still inside? Call *#09 from the prison phone

There are lots of places that will treat hep C now but they aren't always easy to find!

This is the Hepatitis Victoria number and they can let you know the treatment place closest to you.

STEP 2 MEET WITH THE TREATMENT CENTRE DR OR NURSE

At your first meeting they will go through your
hep C history with you.

There is a page at the back of this booklet where you can record your
test results and your appointment times.

If you have your prison medical discharge summary that will help a lot
—especially if you had blood tests while inside.

If you don't have the summary anymore it's no problem - they can
request information from the prison if you consent OR they may just
order new blood tests to confirm what strain of hep C you have.

This is all so they know which medicines to prescribe for your hep C.

Got any worries? This is a good time to talk to the Dr or Nurse.

An example is getting blood tests done. If you are worried about this
because of your veins, they might be able to suggest a good place to
get your blood taken.

STEP 3 BLOOD TESTS #1

They need to do blood tests to make sure you definitely have hep C and what strain you have.

All the strains can be cured- with more than 95% success.



"After years of using, my veins aren't the best.

Even though I wanted to do something about my hep C I was always putting it off because I was worried about the blood tests. I had a lot of problems getting blood in the past and I had a bad time with it.

But when I did finally find the right person she got a vein I had no idea about and it was easier than I thought it would be!"

- Rachel

STEP 4 LIVER TEST

The next step is to check your liver for scarring or damage.

There are two ways to do that:

A scan of your liver, sometime called a Fibroscan. These are quick & painless.

OR

They might just use your blood test results to check your liver. This is called an APRI test and doesn't need a scan.



TIP

If the liver is very scarred there might be more serious damage like cirrhosis.

In that case you may need to see a liver specialist. Treatment can still be done for people with cirrhosis.

TIP

Biopsies are almost never needed anymore! These scans and APRI tests have replaced hep C Liver biopsies!

STEP 5 BACK TO THE TREATMENT
CENTRE DR OR NURSE

Once the bloods and scans are done, you will need to go back and talk about what is next.

Now they know what strain (or genotype) of hep C you have and how healthy your liver is, they can prescribe the hep C treatment medications.

If there are no issues with your liver you will probably get three prescriptions (one for each month of treatment) and will need to pick these up monthly from the chemist.

What if my liver is damaged a lot?

If the scan or APRI test show advanced liver scarring or cirrhosis you might need to go and see a specialist doctor.

They can still treat most people but it may take longer – up to 24 weeks instead of 8 or 12 weeks. You might need to see the Dr more often both during and after treatment as well.

Getting rid of hep C can still make a big difference even if you have severe scarring.

Get your pills

STEP 6 PICKING UP THE MEDICATIONS



Hep C treatments are just pills now! There should not be an injection needed at all.

Once you have a script you can pick the medications up from the chemist. The Dr or nurse who prescribed them should be able to tell you which chemist will have them.

Chemists will charge for the medications but they are discounted by Medicare and Health Care Cards.

The chemist will probably take one script and give you a month's worth at a time. If they do give you all two or three months' worth but you would prefer to pick up 4 weeks worth at a time, just let them know that.



Got a Health Care card?

The meds will cost the same as you pay for any other script, depending on which card you have.



Got a Medicare card?

The meds will cost the same as you pay for any other script, depending on which card you have.

GETTING READY

1

Call 1800 703 003

or contact a clinic from the list near you.

2

Dr Appointment #1

Have your first doctors appointment.

ASSESSMENT AND PRESCRIBING

5

Medical Appointment #2

Pickup your medication script at your second doctors appointment.

PICKING UP YOUR SCRIPT AND TAKING YOUR PILLS

6

Get your medication

Go to the chemist and pick up your first lot of medication.

7

Take Pills

Start taking your medication.

FINISHING UP!

10

Finish Pills

Take your medication until the pills run out.

11

Medical Appointment #3

See the doctor again if necessary.

3

Blood Test

Get a blood test.

4

Fibroscan

Get a Fibroscan done.

5a

Specialist Appointment

If you have liver damage, you will need a specialist appointment.

8

Get your medication

Go to the chemist and pick up your second lot of medication.

9

Get your medication

Go to the chemist and pick up your third lot of medication.

12

Test and Cured

12 weeks later! Get your final blood test to check if you're hep C free.

HepC Free!

TIPS & TRICKS TO GET THROUGH TREATMENT!

Treatment can be a memory test!

TIP #1 GET YOURSELF A 7-DAY PILL BOX



It's easy to forget you are taking the pills and whether you have had one that day. Try a 7 day pill box- they help you tell whether you've had your meds for the day. They are usually a few dollars at the chemist.

TIP #2 SET A DAILY REMINDER ON YOUR PHONE



Set an alarm to go off every day at the same time to remind you to take your pills. Set the regular time for the morning so you take them before the day gets too hectic.

TIP #3 REMEMBER TO GET YOUR NEXT SCRIPT FOR MEDS TO THE CHEMIST IN PLENTY OF TIME.



The chemist sometimes needs a couple of days to order the meds in. Try a reminder note in your pill box or an alarm or reminder on your mobile phone a week before your script runs out so you can take your next one in to the chemist in plenty of time.

TIP #4 IF YOU FORGET TO TAKE A DOSE – DON'T STOP



Just keep on dosing each day and let your Dr or Nurse know. A day won't make a huge difference. If you LOSE your script do the same – let your Dr or Nurse know straight away. They will replace it.

what about side effects?

Not many people get major side effects but if you do then please let your nurse or doctor know!

What?

Some headaches and feeling sick in the stomach can happen.

Some people get fatigued – that is feeling really tired and feeling a bit weak

When?

Often they happen in the first couple of weeks of treatment but sometimes later on as well

What can you do?

Can you take time off if you are working? Can you tell your boss or your family so you have support?

FINISHING TREATMENT

"I felt a bit funny when I'd finished the pills. There was no big feeling of relief and I didn't know if I was cured or not. I went to see my nurse and she reminded me that the treatment works for nearly everyone who finishes the treatment.

My nurse made me an appointment to have blood taken 12 weeks after finishing my pills.

This test is really important. It tells you whether you have been cured!

If you don't have this test you can't know for sure!

If the treatment has worked then the results will say the virus is undetectable."

- Rob

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are now Hep C Free! Your liver will start healing slowly and hopefully you will start feeling better – even if it doesn't happen straight away.

What if I am one of the 5% the treatment doesn't work for?

The Dr's or nurses will talk to you about trying again. They might do some tests or try the medications for a bit longer next time. But you will have another chance!

POST-CURE

The thing to remember now is that the cure is not the same as being immune to hep C!

It's possible to get reinfected with hep C after being cured.

So we still have to stay safe and avoid getting hep C!



INSIDE



Inside it's not easy to use safely. Bleach is the only way to clean equipment.

BUT it isn't 100% effective –and it needs to be mixed right or it doesn't work.

The bleach packets have instructions and the bleach should be a deep colour when mixed right.

OUTSIDE



Outside prison Needle & Syringe Programs (NSPs) provide clean equipment.

It's best to use your own syringe, needle, spoon, swabs and cotton wool to be safest.

POST-CURE HEP C TESTS

Even after you clear hep C you might need to get checked for hep C again.

BUT

Even once you are cured you will test positive for hep C ANTIBODIES – but they are not the same as hep C virus

- Antibodies are made by your body when you first get infected with hep C to try and fight off the hep C and they will be there forever
- They are NOT the Virus
- They are naturally produced and will be in your body forever – but they don't mean you have hep C!

If you use after being cured and are worried about getting hep C again, remember to ask for a PCR test for the virus. It's the only way to know for sure if you have hep C.



health passport

If you can keep some of the following test result information it might help if you lose your discharge summary. Your prison nurse may help fill it out.

What is your **Body Mass Index (BMI)**? _____

Blood tests and other results.

Test	Lab (ask med centre)	Date	Episode Number
LFT			
U&E			
COAGS			
eGFR			
Hep B			
Hep C			
Liver Scan			
Ultrasound			
Other			

appointments

Service / Healthcare Worker	Date	Time	Place	Reason
-----------------------------	------	------	-------	--------

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The following centres all treat hep C. If you have been in prison or still use drugs they are non-judgemental.

HealthWorks - cohealth Footscray	(03) 9448 5511
Innerspace - cohealth Collingwood	(03) 9448 5530
North Richmond Community Health Service	(03) 9418 9830
Access Health Salvation Army Grey St, St Kilda	(03) 9536 7780

important numbers

Hepatitis Infoline

1800 703 003 Infoline from prison: *#09

PAMS

Pharmacotherapy Advocacy, Mediation & Support

1800 443 844

Harm Reduction Victoria

D.O.P.E. Overdose Education

1800 888 236

VACRO

1800 049 871

Opening Doors Homelessness Service

1800 825 955

Melbourne Homelessness Services

1800 627 727

Directline

1800 888 236



HEPATITISVICTORIA

hepatitisinfoline
1800 703 003

Call us for more details or any questions