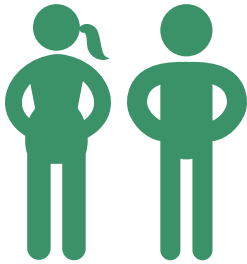


Testing and treating hepatitis C:

Information for patients

GPs can now safely manage and treat most patients with hep C

Person with hep C risk factors



Ask for hep C test

Doctors and nurse practitioners



Test for hep C



Hep C Antibody blood test (HCV Ab)

12 weeks or more after you could have been exposed to hep C

Ask your doctor about ordering 'reflexive HCV testing' by requesting on the pathology form **"Please draw two samples and if HCV antibody positive, reflexively test for HCV RNA"**. This can reduce the number of appointments you need to attend to get a diagnosis and start treatment if needed.

— Negative

A negative result means you have never had hepatitis C

+ Positive

You have been exposed to hep C at some point in your life. You will need a PCR viral detection test (HCV RNA).



+ Positive

A positive HCV RNA test means you have hep C. Read the information on the next page.

— Negative

You don't have hep C any more. You either cleared it naturally or have been cured. You will always have hep C antibodies.

If you test positive to the PCR viral detection test, you have hepatitis C.

Hepatitis C can be cured with direct acting antivirals (or DAAs). They are simple to take and for most people have no significant side-effects.

Your doctor will need to do some more tests and ask you some questions to work out which medicine is best for you and to check whether there is any damage to your liver.

Other tests

Genotype test

There are 6 different genotypes (or strains) of the hepatitis C virus. Your doctor may need to work out which type you have to decide which medicine will be most effective.

Tests for cirrhosis

There are various liver function tests that your doctor can use to work out if there is any liver damage. The type of test used may depend on what is available where you live, and may include:

- **Blood tests:** These will measure the amount of certain chemicals in your blood. Based on how much of these chemicals are in your blood, your doctor can work out if there could be something wrong.
- **Fibroscan (transient elastography):** This is a quick and painless test that measures how well your liver is working. It works like an ultrasound.

HCV RNA test (sometimes called a PCR test)

This blood test measures how much of the hepatitis C virus is in your blood. This test may be used to see if your treatment is working. You will need to have this test again 12 weeks after you finish treatment to make sure the virus is cured.

Tests for other blood borne viruses

If you have hepatitis C, it is possible that you were exposed to another blood borne virus (BBV) as well. Your doctor may need to do tests for HIV and hepatitis B.

Questions your doctor may ask

Your doctor may ask you some other questions about your medical history to make sure the medicine is safe for you, and so that you can look after your liver. Some of these questions are provided here to help you prepare.

Are you taking any other medications?

You should tell them about all medicines you are taking even if you don't think they are important. This includes herbal, traditional Chinese, and over-the-counter medicines because they can interact with the hepatitis C treatment and some can cause damage to your liver.

Do you have any other medical conditions?

If you know that you have another illness, you should tell your doctor so they can make sure it won't be affected by the treatment. For some conditions you may need to see a specialist.

How much alcohol do you drink?

Because hepatitis C affects your liver, alcohol can make any liver damage worse. You can talk to your doctor if you need help to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.

Are you using any drugs?

It is important to tell your doctor if you use any illicit drugs, including steroids or cannabis, so they can manage your treatment properly. Everything you tell your doctor is confidential.

This handout was clinically reviewed in July 2019. It is provided for general information only and not intended as medical advice. Hepatitis Australia encourages all readers to seek independent medical advice before making any decisions based on the information provided here.