

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT GETTING HEP C TREATMENT IN PRISONS?

First, how do I check if I have hep C?

There are two blood tests to check for hep C.

1. **Antibody test** - shows if you have or have ever had hep C in the past (25% of people clear hep C naturally, but everyone will still have antibodies).

If you get a positive antibody test, you need to have a PCR test.

2. **PCR test** (hep C virus test) – shows if the virus is still in your blood, and if you still have hep C.

Can people in prison get hep C treatment?

Yes! People in prison can get treatment. Most centres like to start and finish the treatment while you are inside. So, if you are on remand or haven't been sentenced yet they might wait to start treatment.



If you are due for release you may have to wait to start treatment until you are in the community. You can call Hepatitis Queensland on the Arunta system (number 12) to get contacts of people treating for hepatitis C in your area.

How do I get treatment in prison?

- Put in a form to medical asking for hepatitis C treatment.
- Be patient, there are waiting lists.
- If you have advanced liver disease or cirrhosis you may need to visit the hospital liver clinic, but you can still get the new treatments.

What is the treatment? How long does it take?

Treatment times will vary. People will have 1-2 tablets a day for 8-24 weeks. However, for most people treatment will only be 12 weeks long.

What is the chance of me getting a cure from these new medications?

The new medications have a 95% cure rate – you won't have hep C anymore!

Are there any bad side effects? Will it affect my mental health?

No, the new medications are very different to the old interferon based treatment. Most people will have either no side effects or very minor

side effects – like a headache or tiredness. The new medications do not have mental health side effects, people can still work full-time and continue normal activities while on treatment.

Will it cost anything to go on the treatment?

In most prisons there is no cost, the government pays for treatment both in the prison and in the community. If you start your treatment in the community, you will only need to pay for the dispensing fee (\$6.30 if you have a health care card or \$38.80 if you are working). The actual medications are free. In some private prisons you will have to pay the \$38.80 dispensing fee.

What if I am using drugs?

In the community, people who use drugs are a priority group for hep C treatment. In prison, you may need to consider your own ability to control getting hep C again, especially without access to bleach. You may be able to stop getting hep C again. In time, better health options may be in place to prevent the transmission of hepatitis in prison. However, choosing not to do treatment may impact your liver health. So consider your options and what is right for you.

Some people are deciding to do treatment with people they use with, to reduce the risk of reinfection. Many people are also doing treatment in prison at the same time as their partners and friends in the community. Researchers say that by working together in this way communities will become completely hep C free within 10 years.

What if I'm on a short sentence and want to do treatment in the community?

Several options for treatment in the community many of which are drug user and prisoner friendly services. These include:

- GP's can now treat for Hep C
- Kombi Clinic
www.facebook.com/HepCKombi
- QulHN (QLD Injectors Health Network) is treating people who use drugs, or have a history of using drugs in Brisbane; Gold Coast; Sunshine Coast and Townsville. Contact QulHN on 07 3620 8111
- Sexual Health Clinics
- Alcohol and Drug Services
- Aboriginal Medical Services
- Liver clinics still provide treatment, especially people with cirrhosis.

Support and Information

If you have a question call Hepatitis Queensland on the free prisoner Arunta system number 12. You can request a FREE info pack when you call. Or FREE call in the community 1800 437 222 (1800 HEP ABC)

