

# If you have a client with hepatitis C don't wait to talk about a cure.

Did you know there is a cure for hepatitis C?



## Talk to people in a quiet area.

Remember they may have experienced stigma due to hepatitis C. You don't have to know everything about the hepatitis C cure. You just need to assist that person to reach the right service.

You can get a script for the hepatitis C cure from a GP, some sexual health clinics, Aboriginal Medical Clinics, Alcohol and Drug services or liver clinics.

Most people are cured in about 12 weeks with just *one pill a day*.

Wait times and treatment times may vary. For patient's exact time on treatment people should discuss treatment management with their clinician.



Just know that anytime you want to talk about getting cured, I'm happy to help. I'll put you in touch with the right people when you are ready.



## Don't wait to talk about the cure.

Liver cancer is on the rise. Over **600 people die** from hepatitis C every year.<sup>1</sup>

One simple conversation could save a person's life.  
YOU could be that difference.

If you want more information, or to find the closest referral for your client call the national hepatitis info line: **1800 437 222 (1800 HEPABC)**  
There's nothing to lose except hepatitis C.



hepatitis  
australia



<sup>1</sup> Kirby Institute. *HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia: annual surveillance report 2017*. Sydney: Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, 2017. p7  
Last reviewed 2018

# There are strong links between mental health and hepatitis C. Make the referral to the cure part of your client's mental health care plan.

## Quick facts about hepatitis C and mental health

- There are strong links between stress and increases in liver damage.<sup>2</sup>
- It is crucial that the tablets are taken daily. Mental health workers are key in supporting clients achieve a cure.
- The liver regulates and makes hormones. This includes regulation of sex hormones, thyroid, cortisone and adrenal hormones. Hormone imbalance from poor liver health can affect overall health and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>
- Poor liver health can cause mood swings, brain fog, joint pain, confusion, memory issues, stomach complaints, irritation and fatigue.
- Hepatitis C rates are higher in people who use inpatient mental health services than the general population (19% versus 1.2%).<sup>4</sup>
- Hepatitis C impacts quality of life, independent of stage of disease or drug use history<sup>1</sup>, a cure can improve quality of life and greatly reducing likelihood of death due to liver cancer.
- The American Journal of Gastroenterology recommends patients with psychiatric comorbidities and hepatitis C, receive a multidisciplinary approach that includes psychological assessment, and assessment for hepatitis C treatment.<sup>5</sup>
- Hepatitis C is a highly stigmatised condition, and improvements in mental health are often noted once cured. Being cured can be powerful tool in recovery, self-identity and reducing stigma and anxiety within relationships.
- The hepatitis C virus is also strongly associated with other health issues. Hepatitis C infection is associated with insulin resistance, renal issues, cardiovascular disease, fatigue and cognitive impairment. The most common symptom of hepatitis C is depression. A sizable proportion of health costs can be offset by hepatitis C eradication.<sup>6</sup>

## Mythbusters – don't let the myths slow you down – make the referral

Are the medications free for anyone with a Medicare card? (apart from the standard subsidised prescription fee for each script)	YES
Can clients be retreated?	YES
Can clients access the cure while currently drinking alcohol or using drugs?	YES
Are the new hepatitis C medications associated with neuro psychiatric adverse side effects?	NO
Is hepatitis C treatment contraindicated for people with mental health conditions?	NO

<sup>2</sup> Franciscus, A., (Updated 2018) *Stress and the Liver*. *Hep C Advocate*. [http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets\\_pdf/Stress\\_liver.pdf](http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Stress_liver.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The Hepatitis C Trust. (Updated 2018). *Hormones Regulation*. London. <http://www.hepctrust.org.uk/information/liver/hormone-regulation>

<sup>4</sup> Seccull, A., Richmond, J. Thomas, B & Herrman. *Hepatitis C in people with mental illness: how big is the problem and how do we respond?* *Australasian Psychiatry*. Vol 14. No 4 Dec 2006

<sup>5</sup> Foster, G. R., Goldin, R. D. and Thomas, H. C. (1998), *Chronic hepatitis C virus infection causes a significant reduction in quality of life in the absence of cirrhosis*. *Hepatology*, 27: 209–212. doi:10.1002/hep.510270132

<sup>6</sup> Younossi Z, Park H, Henry L, Adeyemi A, Stepanova M. *Extrahepatic Manifestations of Hepatitis C: A Meta-analysis of Prevalence, Quality of Life, and Economic Burden*. *Gastroenterology*. 2016 Jun;150(7):1599-1608.

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