HEPATITIS C CURE – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You will need two blood tests to see if you have hepatitis C – an antibody and an RNA test.

1. The Antibody Test

An antibody test shows if you have ever had contact with hepatitis C in your life.

If your antibody test is positive, it means you:
- have hepatitis C now, **OR**
- had hepatitis C in the past and have cleared the virus naturally or through treatment.

If your antibody test is negative, you have never had hepatitis C.

2. The RNA test

An RNA test is a blood test that shows whether or not you are infected with hepatitis C now.

This test will either be positive or negative.
- **RNA negative** means that while you do have the hepatitis C antibodies, you do not have the hepatitis C virus anymore
- **RNA positive** means that you do have hepatitis C virus now

Having an RNA test is the only way to be 100% sure that you have hepatitis C now. A positive antibody test does not always mean you still have hepatitis C.

Your doctor may use the words 'PCR positive' or 'PCR negative' instead of RNA positive and negative.

What if my test says I am antibody positive but RNA negative?

If your test results show antibody positive and RNA negative, you don't have hepatitis C

anymore. You had it at some point, and your body cleared it naturally or through treatment.

You will always have hepatitis C antibodies; think of it like a marker that hepatitis C was once there. While having hepatitis antibodies does not transmit hepatitis C, it will not protect you from future infection.

What if the RNA test comes back positive?

If the RNA test is positive, you currently have hepatitis C. Talk to your doctor about the next steps for treating and curing hepatitis C.

What happens next?

Next, your doctor may ask you to have more tests to check the level of the virus in your body and how your liver is going. These tests can include a FibroScan (liver scan) or blood tests.

Is there a cure?

Yes, there is treatment, and it has a 95% cure rate. It is easy to take, and most people don't have any side effects. It is just tablets daily for 8-12 weeks.

Can people who currently inject drugs or drink alcohol access treatment?

Yes, people who currently drink alcohol or use drugs can access treatment. If you inject drugs, consider starting treatment with your partner or friends who use to reduce the chance of getting hepatitis C again.

Where can I get treatment?

There are options for treatment in the community. Many of these can support people who use drugs or people who have been released from prison; these include:

- Hepatitis Queensland's HEPnav directory at www.hepqld.asn.au/hepnav
- Your local doctor
- Sexual health clinics
- Alcohol and Drug Services
- Aboriginal Medical Services
- QuIHN (QLD Injectors Health Network)
- Kombi Clinic - a mobile treatment clinic
- Liver clinics still provide treatment, especially for people with cirrhosis.

How much will treatment cost?

Hepatitis C treatments are $7.30 for those with a concession card or $30 for those without.

How do I fill my script for treatment?

Pharmacies in the community can dispense hepatitis C treatment prescriptions. Not all pharmacies will have these medications in stock, but most will be able to order them in for you. Try to fill your scripts at the same pharmacy each time to ensure there are no delays. If you are being treated by a liver specialist, you will need to use the hospital pharmacy.

Interested in finding out more?

If you are living with hepatitis C and have a question, call the Hepatitis Queensland Infoline on 1800 437 222 or email info@hepqld.asn.au