

About us

Hepatitis information

How to get help

Get involved

Our work

News

Workforce

Hepatitis information > [Hepatitis B](#)

Dealing with your hepatitis B diagnosis

Dr Alice Lam

If you've just been diagnosed with hepatitis B, it might help to know you're not alone.

In 2018 there were 226,612 people in Australia¹ (257 million people worldwide²) living with hepatitis B.

Emotional reactions

After being diagnosed with hepatitis, people can experience a range of reactions including shock and uncertainty, even if they had been expecting

Latest

Parliamentary Morning Tea: We can eliminate hepatitis C!

The Parliamentary Friends Group for Action of Blood Borne Viruses Co-Chairs, Tim Wilson, MP and

a positive test result.

It's not uncommon to feel depressed, anxious, fearful, or worry about possible stigma. In addition, there may also be self-blame, guilt, or embarrassment³.

Take your time working through difficult thoughts and emotions. Try to be patient and have self-compassion. Sometimes talking things through with your doctor or a counsellor can help.

Stigma

Stigma can arise in society or even within yourself. It can isolate you or interfere with you receiving treatment. For instance, a person may feel apprehensive about being seen attending an infectious diseases clinic if they are worried about what others might think.

A great way of reducing stigma is by learning more about hepatitis B. This will empower you to manage your condition together with your doctor, plus it's helpful if you want to educate others.

The learning process

Be open to learning about hepatitis B at your own pace.

Feel free to explore the huge range of resources available such as via [Hepatitis Australia](#). Information is available in [other languages](#), [audio/video formats](#) including [podcasts](#). There are also personal stories [here](#) and [here](#) about real people living with hepatitis B.

Support

Senator Louise Pratt invite you to a Parliamentary Morning Tea on Thursday 12 November.

Renewed calls for Needle & Syringe Programs in prisons ahead of International Drug Users Day

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and Hepatitis Australia are highlighting international calls for Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) in prisons, along with a greater focus on harm reduction initiatives, ahead of International Drug Users Day on 1 November.

Investment in hepatitis research needs to be accompanied by National Strategy implementation funding

6 October 2020 - Hepatitis Australia welcomes the Australian Government's commitment to diverse hepatitis research, however we remain concerned that the 2019 Health Budget

Having the right support is invaluable⁴. Who you share your diagnosis with is a very personal decision. No matter who your trusted person(s) is; you should reflect on the pros and cons of disclosure to each one.

You can also join a support group through your [local hepatitis organisation](#) or online forums like [Hep Forums](#). Do keep in mind that forums may include people from other countries who have differing access to healthcare and medications, and that any health information should be discussed with your doctor.

Finally, these tips might be useful when you see your doctor.

Come prepared

Being prepared will help you get the most out of your appointment. Having a set of questions ready is a great way for you to get the information you need.

Don't be afraid to ask questions

Here are some common questions⁵ others ask:

- How did I get hepatitis B?
- How do I make sure I don't share it with others?
- How will I know if I need treatment?
- What will happen if I don't agree to treatment?
- What are the options for treatment?
- What can I do to stay healthy and look after my liver?

Make notes for later

funding for hepatitis commitments is yet to hit the ground.

Related

Hepatitis B Guide

Testing, treatment and staying healthy. This guide is to help you understand the process from being tested for hepatitis B (often called hep B) to living well with chronic (life-long) hep B.

What is hepatitis B?

Basic information about hepatitis B transmission and how it affects people.

Hepatitis B vaccination

Hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.

Research shows that people who are anxious or stressed are more likely to forget or incorrectly recall information later⁶. So, it's good to make notes during the appointment. Alternatively, ask your doctor for a written list of what you will both do after the appointment.

The right doctor for you

Because hepatitis B can be a lifelong condition, it's ideal if you have a good and honest relationship with your doctor. Consider the following:

- Do you feel comfortable talking to your doctor about your situation?
- Does your doctor explain difficult terms, and answer your questions to your satisfaction?
- Do they take time and not rush you?
- Do they encourage you to take responsibility in your health management?

If you answered no to a few of these questions, then seeking a second opinion might be reasonable. If you need help to find a doctor with experience treating hepatitis B, you can call the National Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 437 222.

This content was written by Dr Alice Lam for Hepatitis Australia. Dr Lam is an Australian General Practitioner (GP) with experience dealing with hepatitis B.

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Most read

Coronavirus COVID-19 factsheet for people with hepatitis B and hepatitis C

Hepatitis Australia has put together a brief factsheet with information about the coronavirus COVID-19 for people living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Hepatitis A

Basic information about hepatitis A in Australia

COVID-19

Information on the coronavirus COVID-19 for people affected by hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

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Last updated

27 September 2019

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487

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