

## SO YOU HAVE HEPATITIS C, WHAT'S NEXT?

The health of your liver needs to be assessed. This can be done by using certain blood results (AST and platelets) to complete an APRI score.

Or your doctor may send you for a liver scan (also known as a Fiboscan) which provides information about the health of your liver. This 15 minute procedure sends a painless pulse through your liver and records how stiff or damaged your liver is. There are no side effects or complications. Our liver nurse will discuss the results with you.

## WHAT WILL THE RESULTS TELL ME?

The fibroscan will tell you if you have:

- **No or mild fibrosis** – a healthy liver with no or a small amount of scarring
- **Moderate or severe fibrosis** – a fair amount of scarring on the liver
- **Cirrhosis** – your liver is very scarred, which may cause your overall health to worsen.

If you have severe fibrosis or cirrhosis you will be referred to your specialist service. In all other cases your GP or community provider can manage and treat your hepatitis C.

## TREATMENT

There is now a simple, fully funded treatment for hepatitis C consisting of 8 to 12 weeks of tablets. Discuss with your GP, nurse or health professional to see if this treatment is suitable for you.

Patients with very advanced liver failure from cirrhosis, are currently prescribed specialist only treatments e.g. Harvoni which is fully funded. This treatment is only available through the hospital.



**Stick it  
to hep C.**

Easy test. Easy cure.

For more information  
Talk with your GP, nurse or  
health professional

[www.stickittohepc.co.nz](http://www.stickittohepc.co.nz)

Health New Zealand  
Te Whatu Ora

# UNDERSTANDING HEPATITIS C



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to hep C.**

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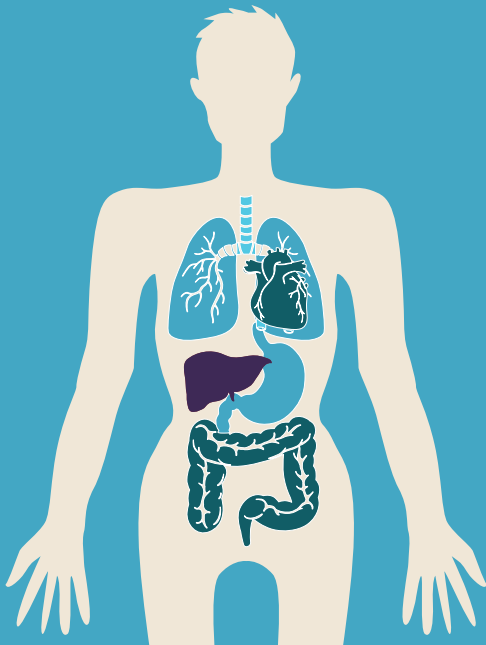
## WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that can damage the liver. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection but in most cases, it can be cured.

## WHY IS THE LIVER IMPORTANT?

The liver is the largest organ inside the body. It performs over 500 functions including:

- Processing food
- Storing vitamins, sugar and iron
- Controls cholesterol
- Clearing the body of waste products and toxins
- Producing clotting factors to stop excess bleeding
- Removing bacteria from the blood to fight infection.



## HOW COMMON IS HEPATITIS C?

Around 20,000 - 25,000 people have chronic hepatitis C in New Zealand – it is estimated that only half are aware they have it.

## WHO IS AT RISK OF HEPATITIS C?

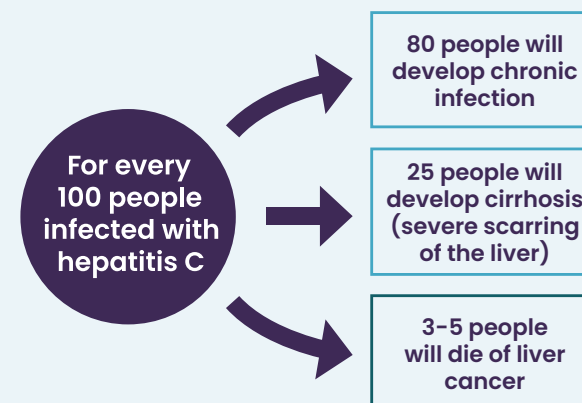
If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should get tested to see if you have hepatitis C.

Have you ever:

- had a tattoo or piercing?
- injected drugs? (even if only once)
- been in prison?
- had jaundice or abnormal liver test?
- lived in or had health care in Asia, the Middle East or Eastern Europe?
- had a blood transfusion before 1992?

Does your mum or anyone you live with have hepatitis C?

## WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEPATITIS C WITHOUT TREATMENT?



## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Most people with hepatitis C will have tiredness, joint pains, loss of appetite, nausea or mood changes which may have been put down to other causes.

These symptoms can rapidly disappear after successful treatment.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT IF I HAVE HEPATITIS C?

If you answered yes to any of the questions, talk to your GP, nurse or health professional. They are there to help you.

Two blood tests are required to diagnose chronic hepatitis C.

- **Antibody test (anti-HCV):** The first test looks for antibodies and confirms whether you have ever been in contact with the hepatitis C virus (HCV).

This maybe a blood test or a finger prick, instant check.

If this test is positive, it doesn't mean you have hepatitis C but it does mean you have been infected at some point.

- **PCR test:** The second test is the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. It is also called the viral load. This confirms if the virus is currently present and active, and that you do have hepatitis C.

This is usually a blood test but may at times be a finger prick test.

A PCR blood test result takes approximately 1 week to come back.