

# Curing hepatitis C

- **Treatment is now more than 95% effective at curing hepatitis C.**
- **Most people can get a prescription from their GP.**
- **It is low cost for people who have a Medicare Card.**

New medicines are now available to cure hepatitis C. They are easy to take with as little as one tablet a day, no injections and most people experience few to no side effects.

The new medicines, known as direct-acting antivirals (or DAAs) are very effective for most people who take them. You will need to take 1 to 3 tablets for 8 to 12 weeks, depending on which medicine you are using.

Which medicines your doctor prescribes for you, and how long you take them for, may depend on whether you have developed cirrhosis (or severe liver scarring).<sup>1</sup>

## Who can get cured?

Anyone over the age of 18 with a Medicare card can get the medicines at low cost.<sup>1</sup>

You should not take DAA medicines if you are pregnant. You should talk to your doctor if you are pregnant and have hep C.<sup>2</sup>

It is important you take your medicines every day for the cure to be effective. If you find it difficult to do this, you should talk to your doctor so they can help you put a plan in place.

## Where can I get treatment?

Your usual GP can now prescribe the new DAA medicines to cure hepatitis C, but they may seek advice from a specialist if they do not have a lot of experience with treating hepatitis C.

In some cases, you will need to see a specialist to get treatment because of other health problems.

Your GP may refer you to a specialist if you:

- also have another blood borne virus, such as hepatitis B or HIV
- have previously had DAA treatment for hep C
- have end stage renal (kidney) disease
- have cirrhosis (severe liver scarring).<sup>3</sup>

## Do the new medicines for hep C have side effects?

All medicines can have side-effects and each person's experience will be different. The new DAA medicines have far fewer side effects than the older medicines. If you do experience side-effects they may include fatigue, headache, insomnia and nausea, but they are uncommon and typically mild. Please discuss possible side-effects with your doctor.<sup>4</sup>

## What medicines are used to cure hepatitis C?

The following DAA medicines are currently used in Australia to cure hepatitis C.

- Epclusa® (sofosbuvir + velpatasvir)
- Maviret® (glecaprevir/pibrentasvir)
- Harvoni® (sofosbuvir + ledipasvir)
- Zepatier® (elbasvir + grazoprevir)
- VOSEVI® (sofosbuvir + velpatasvir + voxilaprevir). Only used if previous DAA treatment has failed.<sup>4</sup>

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## How much do the medicines cost?

The new medicines to cure hepatitis C are available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to people over the age of 18 who hold an Australian Medicare card. You will pay no more than \$41 for each script, or less than \$7 if you have a concession card. This amount is adjusted each year on 1 January, so these amounts are correct for 2019.

You will still need to pay the consultation fee unless your doctor bulk bills.

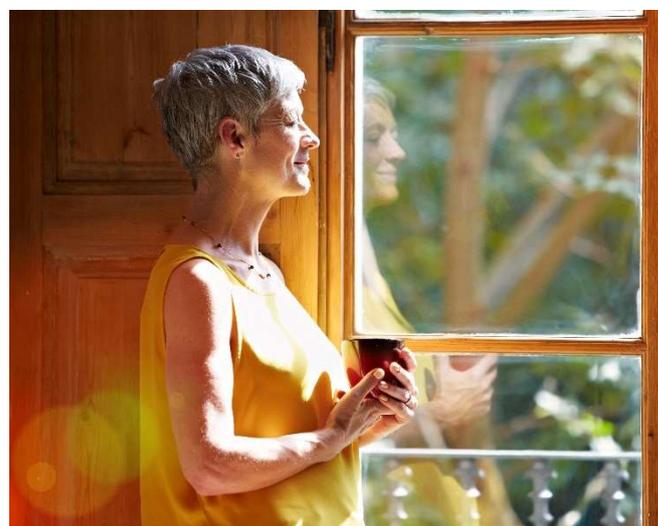
## How will I know if I've been cured?

Being cured of hepatitis C means that treatment has worked, and you no longer have the hepatitis C virus. To check this your doctor will order an RNA test 12 weeks after you have finished treatment and if the results show 'virus undetectable' (no virus) this means you have been cured. It is important to have this final test and not assume you are cured until the results confirm it.

If you have not been cured of hepatitis C after the initial course of medicine the doctor may recommend a second course of treatment, usually with different medicines.

Once you have been cured of hep C, you will always have antibodies. Having hep C antibodies does not mean you still have hep C—this can only be determined with an RNA test.<sup>5</sup>

If you do get hepatitis C again, you can still get cured again.




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### References:

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3. GESA. (2018, September). Clinical guidance for treating hepatitis C virus infection: a summary. Retrieved from Hep C Guidelines: [www.hepcguidelines.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GP-algorithm-v6-Sep-2018-1.pdf](http://www.hepcguidelines.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GP-algorithm-v6-Sep-2018-1.pdf)
4. Khoo, A., & Tse, E. (2016). A practical overview of the treatment of chronic hepatitis C virus infection. *Australian Family Physician*, pp. 718-720.
5. ASHM. (2019, June). Testing for Hep C. Retrieved from Vimeo: [vimeo.com/341923881](https://vimeo.com/341923881)

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