

The Miner's story: shiftwork and hep C treatment can mix

I think I have been living with hep C for up to 25 years, and have only just turned 45 recently. I am heavily tattooed and was a rabid speed injector who didn't take enough precautions, so it came from one of them, probably the speed.

I have also had a poor diet most of my life and have been a heavy drinker, but despite all this, I was rarely sick except for problems I have caused to myself.

Then I started my six-months' hep C treatment and discovered a whole new world of feeling sick.

But, I'm getting ahead of myself. The reason that I am writing this is not to tell you how sick I was. It's because through this magazine I have learned how many people don't want treatment because they are worried about the side effects. If I can do it in my line of work and get through it, despite being hit with about every side effect imaginable, then there is a fair chance all you out there can do it too.

That's why I'm writing this story. I'm a miner and I work one week of 84 hours in day shift, then one week of 84 hours in night shift. This time is spent away from my family with no support base.

I live in a room the size of a cell, not to mention regular temperatures of around 50 degrees in the sun, with dust and flies everywhere. After my day and night shifts, I get six days at home to do the dad-husband thing.

It's a big workload by any standards, but I'm at the five-months point now and expecting a cure. In my first month I lost 12 kilograms, had the flu regularly, and for the first time in my life, had bronchitis, throat, ear and gum infections.

I had a rapid response to the combination therapy — I had no trace of the virus in my blood despite initially having had a high viral load. In the ensuing months I had up just about every symptom in the book but, thankfully, I didn't have to put up with all of them at the same time. I did have good-to-average days as well. I won't bore you or scare you with my symptoms. I just want you to know that, even with my workload, I was able to get through it and in one more month this will just be a bad memory. I hope to be a much healthier dad and grandfather, because my children and grandchildren are the people I have done this for.

- **The Miner, Northern Territory**

