

# Hep C factsheets

## Telling others



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## Introduction

Perhaps the time has come when you are considering telling someone you have hep C. They may be a friend, family member, your employer, a health care worker or potential partner who you are worried about telling.

At the moment you're probably concerned about what to say, how to tell them, and what their reaction will be. These feelings are perfectly normal and are experienced by many people when they are preparing to tell others that they have hep C.

It is important to remember that you have control over who you choose to tell. You may choose not to tell some people about your hep C, and this is your right. Your choice not to tell others is your own and should be respected.

## Who do I have to tell?

Generally speaking, other people have no right or need to know about your hep C, except the blood bank, sperm collection clinics and life assurance providers.

If you have hep C, you should not donate blood, semen or organs (except for your liver which can be donated for use with other people who have hep C).

The only people who have to tell their employers are health care workers who have hep C and who are involved in 'exposure prone procedures', then you are obliged to inform your employer of your infection (ie. PCR status).

HCV positive health care workers should refer to guidelines from their state or territory health authority on the performance of exposure prone procedures (see [www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/PD/2005/pdf/PD2005\\_162.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/PD/2005/pdf/PD2005_162.pdf)).

Health care workers, including dentists, are required to adopt standard infection control precautions for all situations and procedures which may involve exposure to blood or other body fluids. This approach means individuals are not required to disclose their infection status.

Health authorities recommend that people with hep C inform health care workers of their infection as this may be necessary for good health care (ie. prescribing of most appropriate drugs/medications). Some people with hep C have experienced discrimination from health care workers so think about which health care workers you choose to tell.

## When should I tell someone that I have hep C ?

If you have only recently found out that you have hep C it may be worth waiting a while before you tell many people about it. It may take you some time to adjust to the new diagnosis and to decide who you want to tell.

Many people worry about telling a new or potential partner, and in particular how long they should wait before telling them. Some people choose to let the person know before the relationship begins. That way, if the outcome is unfavourable it seems easier to leave the relationship. Others choose to wait until the relationship has developed a little, when there is a certain level of comfort and trust.

## Where and when?

There are better times than others to raise the topic. It is important that you have the discussion when both of you are able to give the subject plenty of time and attention. Also, try to choose a place where you feel comfortable and safe. Some people take the phone off the hook and talk about it over a quiet dinner. Others like to choose a more public place such as a restaurant or park so the person can feel free to go and think about things alone.

## What should I say?

First of all, remember that this is not a confession. You are simply sharing with someone some new information about yourself.

It is a good idea to practise the situation with a person you have already told. If you have not told anyone yet, you may want to practise with a counsellor or even in front of the mirror. Having practised it out loud can make the world of difference when it comes to the real situation.

When you practise, plan what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. You might want to write down some points that you don't want to forget. Try to be natural and spontaneous, and speak calmly and clearly. If you do practise with a friend don't let the response always be calm and understanding. It is important that you are prepared for all situations.

## Conversation starters

Here are some ideas about how to raise the subject. Remember these are only ideas to get you started. Make sure you say what feels comfortable and right for you.

"I've got something I'd like to chat with you about, last year I found out that I have hep C. Can we talk about it now?"

"I feel as though we are really starting to get to know each other and I would like to tell you something personal. I have a virus called hep C, do you know much about it?"

"I feel our relationship is strong and that I can tell you anything. I found out that I have hep C."

"You know how you were telling me last week about your little secret? Well I have one too I'd like to chat about."

## Hep C – basic facts

When you decide to tell someone that you have hep C, they are likely to ask you questions about it. It is important that you are able to answer these questions yourself, or to have some literature on hand that can help you give the answers. This will make it easier for both of you. Contact the *Hep C Helpline* for information resources that will cover most aspects of hep C.

It might be useful to have handy the phone number of the *Hep C Helpline* so the person you're telling can phone for telephone information and support.

## Outcomes

Different people will react differently when you tell them you have hep C. Some may be very concerned for you. Some may find your news perfectly normal and offer you support. Others, however, may respond fearfully or belittle you.

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If the outcome is a negative one, it is not a reflection on you and you are not responsible for their reaction. People might be ignorant about hep C. This is why it is a good idea to have up to date and accurate information on hand. You might want to encourage them to phone the *Hep C Helpline* or a counsellor.

It may take some people a little time to take in the information you have just shared with them. Remember that you also may have had many different thoughts, feelings and questions when you found out that you had hep C.

Whatever the outcome, give yourself a pat on the back because you have achieved a task that many people find difficult.

### More information

For more free, confidential, and non judgemental information and support call the *Hep C Helpline* (see below).

To chat with others who might have been through a similar situation, contact the *Hep C Helpline* for possible contact with a *HepConnect* peer support volunteer, or chat online with others via the internet peer support forum, *HepCAustralasia* (see below).

### Also see

*My Choice to Tell* (booklet)

*My Rights* (booklet)

Also contact *The Hep C Helpline* who can provide further information or discuss peer support services:

9332 1599 (Sydney callers)

1800 803 990 (NSW regional callers)

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*Hep C Helpline* and *HepConnect* (peer support): 02 9332 1599 / 1800 803 990

Web info: [www.hepatitisc.org.au](http://www.hepatitisc.org.au) Web peer support: [www.hepcaustralasia.org](http://www.hepcaustralasia.org)

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