

Hep B factsheet: Telehealth and hep B



For more information about anything in this factsheet, phone the Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 803 990 or go to www.hep.org.au

Facsheet overview

- You can have Telehealth appointments over the phone or on a screen (phone, computer or tablet).
- Anyone with a Medicare card can use Telehealth.
- If you have hep B, you can use Telehealth without having a face-to-face appointment first.
- Telehealth appointments are secure and private.

Telehealth appointments and hep B

Telehealth lets you and your doctor have an appointment on a phone or on a screen (smart phone, laptop, computer or tablet).

There are benefits to having a Telehealth consultation.

- Saves time and money on travel.
- Makes it easier for family or a friend to come with you to the appointment.
- If you live in a regional area, you may be able to see your liver specialist sooner.
- Less face-to-face visits with liver specialists.
- Quicker testing and treatment.
- Easier for single parents and carers.
- Easier for people with disabilities.
- Saves you a trip to the doctor if you are in the COVID-19 risk group.

Am I eligible for a Telehealth appointment?

All Medicare card holders in Australia are eligible. Telehealth can be used for appointments with doctor, nurses, liver specialists, pathology requests, prescriptions and mental health services.

People in COVID-19 isolation or quarantine can see any health provider using Telehealth. Most people must see a health provider face-to-face once before they can use Telehealth. **If you have hep B, you can see use Telehealth without having a face-to-face appointment first.**

Liver specialists and other health care providers don't have to bulk bill Telehealth, so you may need to pay and claim a Medicare rebate.

How do I book a Telehealth appointment?

When you make your appointment, ask to use Telehealth. Some doctors make appointments over the phone and some use video calls. If you can't do a video call, ask for a phone appointment. They will call you at the appointment time.

If you are having a video call, the link will be sent to you. You click on the link on your phone, tablet, laptop, or computer. No need to sign in or download an app.

Security and privacy

Telehealth is very secure, safe and private. They use industry-standard encryption and security protocols to protect your privacy.

You or the doctor should not record Telehealth sessions without everyone's consent. The doctor will take notes for your medical record, just like a face-to-face appointment.

The appointment should be private and comfortable. Let your doctor know if you want to have other people with you for the appointment. If another person (e.g. a nurse), is joining, the doctor will ask your permission.

- You can say no to a Telehealth appointment.
- There should be no extra cost for Telehealth. If they bulk bill, you should only pay your usual fees.
- If you feel uncomfortable, you can ask to end the appointment.
- A follow-up appointment will be arranged if needed.
- You are welcome to ask questions before, during, and after the consultation.

Services for patients

You can get support for your Telehealth appointment. For example, an Interpreter or an Aboriginal Liaison Officer can join your call if you need them.

Appointment for Hep B

In your first Telehealth appointment, you will be asked about your health, any risk factors for viral hepatitis and if you have any signs or symptoms. If you need a blood test, your doctor will fill out a pathology request form.

Pathology and diagnostic imaging tests can be ordered via video, phone, or in-person consultations. The request forms can be emailed, mailed, or picked up in person. Some centres do pathology testing on-site, which means the clinic staff will text or email you details so you can make the appointment.

If your blood test results show that you have liver disease or a high viral load, your doctor may refer you to a liver specialist. Your doctor will write you a referral, which you can give or send to the liver specialist. You can contact the liver specialist through Telehealth, or in person, to make an appointment. Not everyone with hep B needs treatment, but if you do, your doctor will write a prescription. Any repeat prescriptions can be filled through Telehealth. It is important that you take your medication daily, so get a repeat prescription before you run out.

If you need a prescription, it will be delivered to a chemist near you, where you can pick it up or have it mailed to you. Prescriptions can also be sent to you via email or text message, with E-prescriptions using a QR code texted to your phone. Just show the QR code to the chemist and they will scan it to find your prescription and fill it.

If you have hep B and show no signs of liver disease or other health problems, your doctor will suggest you have 6-monthly check-ups with a blood test and a FibroScan.

During the COVID19 pandemic, all doctors, liver specialists, nurses, and medical personnel are doing everything possible to keep clinics as safe as possible. Before any in-person appointment, we recommend that you contact your doctor or liver specialist to see if there are any additional precautions you should take.

I am not sure I have received a quality service via Telehealth. What can I do about this?

If you have not received a satisfactory health service, you can:

- Read the Medical Board of Australia website about making a complaint: <https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/>, or
- Submit a health provider tip off on the Department of Health website: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-provider-tip-off>

Further information for patients

If you are seeking further information on how to access Telehealth and prescriptions from home, please see the following guides:

[Accessing health service during COVID-19 restrictions](#)

[Getting medicines during COVID-19 restrictions](#)

[Consumer fact sheet on Telehealth services at MBS Online](#)

[Home Medicine Service - information for consumers](#)

To talk about anything in this factsheet, in NSW phone the Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 803 990 or go to www.hep.org.au to use our Live Chat or email service.

This factsheet was developed by Hepatitis NSW. It was reviewed by the Hepatitis NSW Medical and Research Advisory Panel.

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