

Hep C factsheet: Telehealth and hep C



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 C, you can use Telehealth without having a face-to-face appointment first.
- Telehealth appointments are secure and private.

Telehealth appointments and hep C

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.
- if you're worried about stigma and discrimination, Telehealth lets you see a doctor that's not local.

Am I eligible for a Telehealth appointment?

All Medicare card holders in Australia are eligible. Telehealth can be used for appointments with doctors, 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 C, 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 upfront 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.

Appointments for Hep C

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, scans and x-rays can be ordered via video, phone, or in-person consultations. The request forms can be emailed, mailed, or picked up in person. Some practices offer pathology testing on-site, which means the clinic staff will text or email you details so you can make the appointment.

If you had a positive DBS test (see below) for hep C, you then need to get a blood test that includes liver and kidney function. You can see your doctor a week later to discuss the results.

If your blood test results show that you have liver disease, your doctor may refer you to a liver specialist. Your doctor will write you a referral.

If you have hep C and show no signs of liver disease or other health concerns, your doctor will write you a prescription for one of the DAA's (Direct Acting Anti-Viral treatments), which cure hep C for more than 95% of people.

The prescription will be sent 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, 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.

After you begin your hep C medications, your doctor will let you know when they need to see you again. You might need another or a repeat prescription, so you will need another appointment. During treatment, you can expect one to three appointments. Telehealth can be used for these appointments.

You will need to make another appointment 12 weeks after finishing treatment to get a pathology request form for a blood test. This test will show if you are CURED of hep C.

During the COVID19 pandemic, all doctors, liver specialists, nurses, and health staff are doing everything they can to keep clinics as safe as possible. We recommend that you call your doctor or liver specialist before any in-person appointment to see if there are any additional precautions you should take.

Hep C and Dried Blood Spot (DBS) Test

If you are thinking about testing for hep C during COVID-19 you could start by ordering a Dried Blood Spot test to be sent to you. [You can learn about DBS testing here >>](#). Fill out the questions on [the Get Started> tab here >>](#) to see if you can get a hep C test kit mailed to you. Instructions and everything you need will be in the kit. The test is easy to perform alone, and you don't need to go to a clinic or see a doctor.

If you get a negative result, it means you don't have hep C. If hep C is detected, you will be contacted by phone, text, or email. You can ask the nurse to send the results to your doctor, or another health service. You will then need another blood test to make sure and to check your liver health. You can call the Hepatitis Infoline for confidential help finding a doctor.

Please use our online chat or call our Hepatitis Infoline at 1800 803 990 if you need help with the Dried Blood Spot Test. Our online chat is on every page of <https://www.hep.org.au/>

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](#)

Free smart phone app for people about to start hep C treatment

The Hepatitis NSW Hep Connect program helps people living with hep C with everything from testing to treatment to cure.

The Perx Health smart phone app can help you remember to take your medication on a daily basis, as well as remind you to do other important health tasks like attending appointments and picking up prescriptions. The app features games, community connection, education, and some exciting challenges. And there are rewards!

If you are about to start hep C treatment, please think about downloading the app and join us for free.

If you have hep C and are about to start treatment, we would love to have you on board. There are no restrictions on who can get supported.

It is simple to join!

- The app is completely free and takes less than a minute to download.
- Simply click on the survey link, answer the four basic eligibility questions, and you're in!
- The only prerequisites for participation are a smartphone and an email address.

Features of the Perx Health app

- The Perx Health app contains no advertising, and no data is shared with third parties.
- Consistent disclosure and consent to privacy in accordance with NSW Health guidelines.
- App users are greeted with automated welcome emails and SMS messages.
- Reward-based – offer vouchers in exchange for medication adherence and appointment attendance.
- App users can contribute by filling out our feedback surveys.
- Are if you're out of data the app will continue to function for a month.

Want to come onboard? Click here to start the survey

<https://perxhealth.com/survey/select-location/>

If you would like to know more about the Hep Connect Perx program, please get in touch with Susanne Wilkinson, Project Officer swilkinson@hep.org.au

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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