

Hepatitis B & C: *FAST FACTS*

Almost 500,000 people in Australia, or 2% of the population, live with chronic viral hepatitis (hepatitis B and C). This is over 17 times the number of people living with HIV/AIDS and more than double the number of people living with epilepsy. 15,000 Australians are diagnosed with viral hepatitis each year - around the same number diagnosed with breast cancer. Nearly 1000 Australians die each year from hepatitis B and C. Four Victorians die every week as a consequence of viral hepatitis. Liver cancer largely caused by chronic viral hepatitis infection is the fastest increasing cause of cancer death in Australia.

HEPATITIS B

- An estimated 2 billion people worldwide have been infected with the hepatitis B virus and more than 350 million people worldwide living with chronic (life-long) hepatitis B.
- Approximately 207,000 Australians are living with chronic hepatitis B, and more than one third of them don't know it. This is around eight times the number of people living with HIV in Australia.
- Approximately 56,000 Victorians are living with chronic hepatitis B.
- Approximately 20,000 Aboriginal Australians are living with chronic hepatitis B.
- 3-5% of Australian prisoners have chronic hepatitis B.
- Chronic hepatitis B disproportionately affects migrant and refugee communities in Australia, especially people from the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle-East, the Mediterranean region and Sub Saharan Africa.
- Less than 3% of people in Australia with hepatitis B are currently receiving antiviral treatment.
- Without intervention, it has been estimated that by 2017 the incidence of liver cancer in Australia attributable to hepatitis B will be three times that seen in 2008.
- Untreated chronic hepatitis B can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer for up to 25% of people with the virus.
- Chronic hepatitis B is the second biggest cause of cancer worldwide (after tobacco) and has been estimated by the WHO to be the 10th leading cause of death worldwide. 380 Australians die each year from hepatitis B related disease.

HEPATITIS C

- An estimated 170 million people worldwide are living with chronic hepatitis C.
- Over 230,000 Australians are estimated to have chronic hepatitis C, and around a quarter of them don't know they have it. This is around nine times the number of people living with HIV in Australia.
- Approximately 65,000 Victorians are living with chronic hepatitis C.
- Approximately 20,000 people 60+ years of age are living with hepatitis C in Australia.
- Between 30-40% of Victorian prisoners have chronic hepatitis C.
- Less than 2% of people with hepatitis C seek treatment each year.
- Around 51,500 Australians with chronic hepatitis C have moderate liver disease, and around 6500 people are living with hepatitis C-related cirrhosis.
- Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver transplants in Australia.
- In Australia, annual deaths from hepatitis C are rising and in 2006 they surpassed deaths from HIV/AIDS. 530 Australians die each year from hepatitis related disease.

References:

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