



May 2010

5. Support and Information

Education + Resource Centre (ERC)

Fairfield House
The Alfred
Moubray Street
Prahran 3181

Telephone
03 9276 6993

Facsimile
03 9533 6324

Email
erc@alfred.org.au

Open times
Monday–Thursday
9:30am to 4:30pm

Many people feel confused and are faced with a range of issues and decisions when they first find out they have hepatitis C. You may feel the need to talk to someone about your concerns or feelings.

Specialist support services can offer you an environment where you can discuss openly whatever you feel you need to. The services are free, non-judgmental and confidential.

They also provide advice on other services that may be useful to you and can often arrange to send out information to you. You may feel the need to access a variety of services depending on your needs at the time.

1. Counselling

'Counselling has been wonderful. When I started seeing my counsellor, I was pretty down and 3 months before that I had been suicidal, due to side effects of treatment. It has been a real roller coaster ride. In counselling sometimes I laugh and sometimes I cry. Now I have things to look forward to. Having regular counselling is the best thing I could ever have done. I didn't realise it would be so good for me.'

'After receiving a hepatitis C diagnosis from my GP, for 7 weeks I thought I was going to die. I was in a real mess. Counselling has helped me with the terrible fear I had. My family doesn't cope very well, so it is important to have someone to talk to, otherwise I'd lose my mind.'

Being told that you have hepatitis C may present you with a range of challenges. If you are feeling overwhelmed at the moment and possibly finding it difficult to know who to turn to, it may be useful to speak to a counsellor. You can also speak to a counsellor with your partner, family or friend. A counsellor will encourage you to express your feelings and thoughts and can assist you in making decisions around things such as



A free and confidential service for people seeking information about HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections (STIs)

disclosing your hepatitis C status, lifestyle changes and treatment. He/she can also provide information and tell you about other resources and supports.

'Unburdening myself with an experienced counsellor (once unthinkable and unmanly to me) is a pressure release for not only me, but my spouse, loved ones and friends. It is also an outlet for me to discuss my fears, anxieties, questions and hopes about relationships, social life, medical ethics, well being, basically anything and everything I don't wish to burden my loved ones with. I've found the release of these added pressures of life with [hepatitis C] has left me more free to resume my journey through life.'

You don't have to have a huge problem to talk with a counsellor. Sometimes it can be useful to simply "offload". If you keep things bottled up, eventually you could feel overwhelmed by all the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing. It is much healthier and often feels much better to work through things as they happen.

'It is reassuring that there is someone out there who is willing to listen to me and help me with my problem. I don't have to hold things in. It is good to have someone neutral because I don't have the conflict of family or friends giving me their opinion. My counsellor can guide me into thinking about other ways of thinking and other ways of dealing with things.'

If you are not happy with a particular counsellor, don't give up. All counsellors work differently and you may have to shop around before you find someone that suits you.

Counselling

The Alfred, Social Work

Counselling service for people considering or undergoing hepatitis C Treatment. Referrals through The Alfred Liver Clinic, Haemophilia Treatment Centre, or self referral for Alfred Hospital patients.

The Alfred, Social Work Department
Commercial Road Prahran
Ph: (03) 90763026

Positive Counselling

Provides a free and confidential counselling service for people whose lives are affected by Hepatitis C counseling

Fridays only.

Williams Road Family Therapy Centre



3 Williams Road,
Windsor
Ph: (03) 9530 2311
Email: info@positivecounselling.org.au
Web: www.positivecounseling.org.au

GP Mental Health Care Plan

Your GP can refer you for Medicare subsidized sessions with a psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist. The referral process involves your GP preparing a Mental Health Care Plan. You may receive up to 12 sessions of individual therapy in a calendar year.

Support Groups

'It's highly valuable. I have come a long way since I was first diagnosed with the help of the support group.'

'Listening to other people's stories took away the sense of isolation.'

'At my first meeting I realised people were telling my story.'

'The support group is something that I now look forward to every month. At the start I was hesitant in going.'

'Counselling and attending the support group gave me a new perspective, and once the guilt was banished I began to address Hep C in a way I hadn't done previously.'

Support groups provide a forum for people with hepatitis C to come together, find out information and talk to others with hepatitis C. Some people find that support groups offer a safe environment to share experiences, discuss issues and reduce feelings of isolation.

2. Support and information services.

Hepatitis C Victoria: a statewide organisation providing education, community support, resources, referrals, and advocacy to those affected by hepatitis C.

www.hepcvic.org.au

Ph: (03) 9380 4644

Toll Free: 1800 703 003

• telephone [advice and information](#)



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- the *Good Liver* – a regular newsletter for people living with hepatitis C, which keeps you up-to-date with the latest treatments, issues and social activities
- a hepatitis C information kit
- a range of support groups, including local groups
- education and training to groups and workplaces

Clinic-based support groups: run through some of the Hepatitis clinics. Contact your clinic or Hepatitis C Victoria Centre for details.

User Groups

VIVAIDS (Victorian Drug User Group): for non-judgmental support and information on safer using and the effect of specific drugs

Ph: (03) 9329 1500

Email: vivaids@vivaids.org.au

www.vivaids.org.au

3. Telephone services

Hepatitis C Infoline run by Hepatitis C Victoria provides anonymous and confidential telephone information, support and referral.

Ph: 1800 703 003

Vietnamese Hepatitis C Helpline: provides recorded information on hepatitis C in Vietnamese
Toll free ph: 1800 456 007

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Lifeline provides a confidential service. Volunteer telephone counsellors will listen, support and assist you to clarify for options and choices for yourself. Counsellors may also provide you with information about community services, or other Lifeline Services which you may find useful.

Suicide Line: 1300 615 215

Suicide Line (Vic) is available throughout Victoria 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the cost of a local call (mobiles extra). Interpreters can be arranged for non-English speaking callers.

4. Resource centres

HIV, Hep, STI Education + Resource Centre at The Alfred Hospital for information and resources on all aspects of living with hepatitis C.



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Includes: Information & resources, specialist library, supply of brochures and posters, referral to testing, treatment and support services.

www.hivhepsti.info

Ph: (03) 9076 6993

Email: erc@alfred.org.au

Country Awareness Network Victoria Inc

CAN is a community based not-for-profit organisation that provides information, support and referral to **rural and regional** communities in Victoria about Hep C.

34 Myers Street, Bendigo

Ph: 03 5443 8355

Email: can@can.org.au

Web: www.can.org.au

5. Finances

Centrelink Payments

Some people with hepatitis C feel unwell, due to symptoms of hepatitis C or the side effects of treatment.

If feeling unwell affects your ability to work, you may be able to get financial payments from Centrelink, including Disability Support Pension, Sickness Benefit or Carers Pension.

If you would like to talk this through with someone, it might be a good idea to contact a social worker / counsellor.

To find out more about Centrelink payments, visit the Centrelink website:

www.centrelink.gov.au

Or contact Centrelink on the following phone numbers:

Employment Services: 13 2850

Disability, Sickness and Carers: 13 2717

Family Assistance Office: 13 6150

Superannuation

If your ability to work is being affected due to hepatitis C, it might be worth getting some information and finding out your rights regarding superannuation and disability insurance.

Where to Get Help

The Chronic Illness Alliance have developed a plain English guide to legal issues for people whose illness is affecting their ability to work.

www.chronicillness.org.au/workwelfarewills



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Produced by

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