

Viral Hepatitis and COVID-19



Updated January 2022

Both viral Hepatitis and COVID-19 are infectious diseases caused by different viruses. Hepatitis viruses cause hepatitis, and a coronavirus causes COVID-19 - SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2). They can both be transmitted from person to person but through separate ways. They also differ in testing, treatment, and prevention.

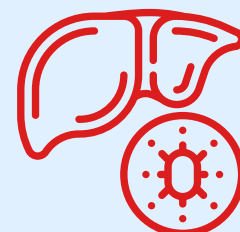
How are viral hepatitis and COVID-19 spread?



Viral Hepatitis

Viral hepatitis affects the liver, and the three most common viral hepatitis are: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C. They have different transmission routes:

- Hepatitis A - caused by the hepatitis A virus and transmitted by consuming food and drinks contaminated with the hepatitis A virus.
- Hepatitis B – caused by the hepatitis B virus and transmitted by blood-to-blood contact, from mother to baby at birth and through sexual contact.
- Hepatitis C – caused by the hepatitis C virus and transmitted through blood contact. Very rarely is it transmitted from mother to baby at birth.



COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease, first identified in late 2019 and caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. This virus is spread through droplets, from coughing and sneezing, singing, breathing and speaking that can be:

- In the air and inhaled (breathed in)
- On objects that are touched and could be contaminated, such as door handles, railings, money, etc., then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Spread even if the infected person does not have symptoms or feel unwell.



How do you know you have viral hepatitis or COVID-19?

Viral Hepatitis

A specific blood test is needed to diagnose viral hepatitis, either a hepatitis A test, hepatitis B test and hepatitis C test, respectively.



COVID-19

- A PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is needed to diagnose COVID-19 and are available free at testing and fever clinic sites or pathology services.

To find a site go to:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/stay-informed/testing-and-fever-clinics#testing-centre-map>

Or

- A RAT (Rapid Antigen Test) which is done at home, by collecting samples from the respiratory tract (either by collecting secretions from the nostrils and/or throat or a saliva sample). It is ESPECIALLY important to follow the directions in the test kit to ensure an accurate result. If the result is positive for the virus, it is important to register the result online at:

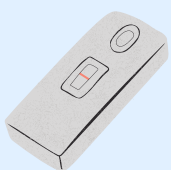
<https://www.qld.gov.au/rat-positive>.

Concession card holders will be able to access up to 10 free RAT kits over the course of three months, at a maximum of five in a single month at pharmacies.

There are 3 levels of RATs:

- Very high sensitivity (pick up over 95% of positive cases)
- High sensitivity (pick up over 90% of positive cases),
- Acceptable sensitivity (pick up over 80% of positive cases).

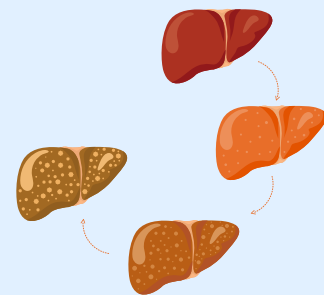
The details can be found here: <https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-rapid-antigen-self-tests-are-approved-australia>



What are the consequences of these diseases?

Viral Hepatitis

- Hepatitis A: is a short-term infection and people can recover without treatment. Very few people will die from hepatitis A. It has no long-term effects on health.
- Hepatitis B: can be a short term (less than 6 months) or a long term (over six months) infection. Long-term hepatitis B infection is called chronic hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B can cause some people to develop liver cancer, liver cirrhosis and liver failure without regular monitoring or treatment when needed.
- Hepatitis C: can be a short term (less than 6 months) or a long term (over six months) infection. Chronic, untreated hepatitis C can cause people to develop liver cancer, cirrhosis, or liver failure. There are treatments to cure hepatitis C.



COVID-19

A respiratory infection that for most people will not cause significant problems and they may only have symptoms like a cold (runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough, headache, fatigue (tiredness) and loss of taste and smell. Other symptoms may include diarrhoea, vomiting or nausea, shortness of breath or feeling faint. Young people who have shortness of breath or feel faint should see their doctor. Throughout the world, COVID-19 has caused people to become sick and need hospital care, including needing ventilation in intensive care units, and sadly death for some.

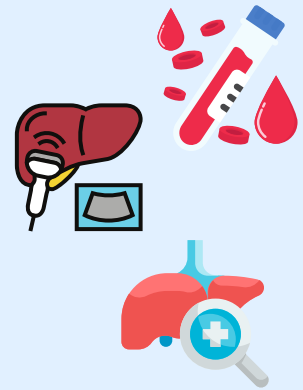
Current information tells us that most people with the infection, especially younger people, will experience a mild respiratory infection. However, older people or people with other health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease, such as asthma, are at higher risk of becoming severely ill if infected with COVID-19 including some people who have been vaccinated.



Is there treatment for viral hepatitis and COVID-19?

Viral Hepatitis

- Hepatitis A: there is no treatment, and people can recover from the infection by themselves.
- Hepatitis B: there are effective treatments taken for life once started. Many people do not require treatment but need ongoing recommended monitoring by their doctor for life.
- Hepatitis C: there are highly effective treatments. Over 95% of people who have treatment, will be cured.



COVID-19

There are no specific effective treatments for early COVID-19 infection yet. Treatment of the symptoms includes rest, paracetamol/ibuprofen, throat lozenges (to soothe a sore throat), drinking water and maintaining a healthy diet to help boost the immune system.



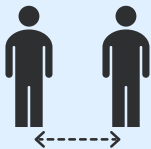
How to prevent viral hepatitis and COVID-19?

Viral Hepatitis

- Hepatitis A: a hepatitis A vaccine is available to prevent infection. It is also important to ALWAYS wash your hands with soap and water after going to toilet and before preparing and eating food. Maintaining strict hand hygiene can also reduce the risk infection by the COVID-19 virus.
- Hepatitis B: a hepatitis B vaccine is available to prevent infection. It is also important to avoid blood contact and practice safe sex.
- Hepatitis C: there is no vaccine available. It is very important to avoid blood contact.



How to prevent viral hepatitis and COVID-19?



COVID-19

There are vaccines available for COVID-19 which will help prevent severe infection. These are available and are FREE to all people from either a GP, pharmacy or Government-run vaccination HUB. For locations of vaccination sites:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccine/book>

The following ways will help you to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19:

- Get Vaccinated, including booster shots when appropriate
- Wear a mask (surgical 3 ply disposable masks are recommended. If using a cloth mask, it must be washed every day after use and recommended to be made from 3 layers) <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/protect-yourself-others/face-masks>
- Wash your hands with soap and water properly and frequently (at least 20 seconds each time), or use an alcohol-based hand rub (with at least 60% alcohol content) <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/all/prevention/hand-hygiene>
- Cover coughs and sneezes using tissues or your elbow if tissues are not available
- Try to keep 1.5 meters distance between you and other people
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes

Follow all the restrictions advised by the Australian/Queensland Government relating to travel, gatherings, vaccinations etc.

What should you do if you have chronic hepatitis?

In addition to taking precautions to protect yourself from getting COVID-19, you also need to:

- Keep **taking your medication** if you are on the treatment.
- Keep up with your **regular monitoring** including blood tests and ultrasounds. Do not cancel scheduled appointments. Your doctor may change the appointment to phone or Telehealth appointment.
- Phone your doctor prior to your medical appointment if you have flu-like symptoms and follow your doctor's instructions.
- Have the flu vaccine when it is available.
- Stay up to date with the latest recommendations provided by the Government and Health Departments to protect yourself from COVID-19.

You can find the latest COVID-19 information at the following websites:

www.health.gov.au
www.health.qld.gov.au
www.australia.gov.au
www.who.int

http://



More information about Viral Hepatitis in different languages

Please contact
Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ)

Website: www.eccq.com.au/bbv
Phone: 07 3844 9166
Email: health@eccq.com.au