

MEDIA RELEASE

NT ramps up hepatitis awareness with free clinics and events ahead of World Hepatitis Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Northern Territory is marking **World Hepatitis Day (28 July)** with a series of community events and free testing clinics across the Territory, aimed at raising awareness and boosting testing for hepatitis B and C - two of the leading causes of liver cancer globally and in Australia.

“Hepatitis B and C cause around 90% of liver-related deaths in Australia, and liver cancer is rising faster than any other cancer. The earlier people are tested, the sooner they can be cured or managed – and prevent serious illness,” says Nurse Practitioner at Northern Territory Aids and Hepatitis Council’s (NTAHC) Hepatitis Clinic **Anngie Everitt**.

[Recent research by the Menzies School of Health Research](#) has found a unique strain of chronic hepatitis B, the C4 sub-genotype, which predominantly affects First Nations people, is particularly aggressive in its progression to liver cirrhosis and liver cancer.

By the end of 2023, more than **6,300 people** were living with hepatitis B or C in the NT. Yet treatment rates are falling: ***just 2% of people with hepatitis C and 10.9% of people with hepatitis B received treatment in 2023***, despite the availability of cures and prevention options.

“We’re urging anyone who thinks they might be at risk to take the free test and access treatment. There’s a simple one pill a day for 12 weeks cure for hepatitis C and treatment and vaccination for hepatitis B.

“If anyone in your family has hepatitis B, take the test. If you’ve ever been in prison, take the test. Don’t let the fear of stigma stop you from taking a simple test to save your life,” Anngie Everitt says.

NTAHC Alice Springs Manager Karen Nicolaysen says NTAHC Alice Springs coordinates the national HepLink Australia program and offers free and confidential Hepatitis C testing in partnership with Clinic 34 Monday to Friday during business hours. People can get their results on the spot within 1-60 minutes.

“The testing model is peer-led and is carried out by peer workers with lived experience of hepatitis C,” says Karen Nicolaysen.

“As well as testing they provide person-centred harm reduction education aimed at improving a person’s quality of life.

“Our peer workers meet people in a non-judgmental manner based on their own lived experience and provide crucial support from the time of testing and throughout treatment to cure if there is a positive result. It really makes a difference to people knowing that the person doing the Hep C testing has had it themselves and is someone they can connect with on a that level. That in itself is destigmatising for people to experience,” Karen Nicolaysen says.

NTAHC Darwin’s Hepatitis Clinic is held every Thursday and offers confidential testing and treatment plans tailored to the Territory’s diverse community.

Peer worker **Sal Endemann**, whose lived experience and local knowledge makes her a powerful guide for people navigating hepatitis treatment, takes excellent care of clients.


“Sal works one-on-one with clients to reduce stigma, provide support and connect them to life-changing care. Our innovative nurse-peer partnership model of hepatitis care at NTAHC Darwin and Alice Springs has been so successful because of the person-centred, holistic approach we take to each person and their unique circumstances. We walk alongside the person for the whole process from testing to treatment to cure, working to remove barriers that may have previously stopped people from seeking testing or treatment,” **Anngie Everitt** says.

Symptoms of hepatitis B may be mild or go unnoticed but can include fatigue, joint pain, jaundice, dark urine or abdominal discomfort. Without treatment, both hepatitis B and C can lead to liver failure or cancer.


Free clinics and awareness events include:

Free Hepatitis Testing – Alice Springs

 Sunday 20 July |  9am – 1pm

 Todd Mall Lawns (as part of Todd Mall Sunday Markets)

✓ Point-of-care hepatitis C testing and NTAHC information stall

 Monday-Friday 8.30-5pm (closed for lunch 12-1pm) at NTAHC Alice Springs, Shop 3, Reg Harris Lane, Todd Mall

Free Hepatitis Testing – Darwin

 Every Thursday at NTAHC Darwin, 1 Searcy St, Darwin

Healthy Liver Lunch – Darwin

 Wednesday 31 July |  11:30am – 1:30pm

 NTAHC Darwin, 1 Searcy Street, Darwin City

✓ Free lunch, teas and juices, vegan options, clinic info

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Journalists are invited to attend the **Darwin** or **Alice Springs** events or to arrange interviews with:

- **Sal Endemann**, Hep Link Peer Worker – NTAHC Darwin

- **Anngie Everitt – Nurse Practitioner** - Hepatitis Clinic – NTAHC Darwin
- Karen Nicolaysen, NTAHC Alice Springs Manager - Available for media in Alice Springs.

To book interviews or request further information:

 James Emery – comms@ntahc.org.au 08 8944 7777 or Linda Apps 0433 999 017

Together, we can break the stigma, boost testing and ensure no one is left behind in the fight against hepatitis in the NT.

Find out more about World Hepatitis Day

https://www.worldhepatitisday.org.au/get_involved

World Hepatitis Day is on 28 July – the birthday of Baruch S. Blumberg who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1976 for his Hepatitis B research.

Key NT facts

- There are at least **1820** people in the NT living with hepatitis C. **More than a third** of all people living with **hepatitis C** at the start of 2016 were **cured by the end of 2023**.
- **At least 4537 people** in the NT are affected by **hepatitis B**.
- **494 or 10.9%** had been treated by the end of 2023 and **21.3% had received care**, but more than **75%** of people living with chronic **hepatitis B** have **not been diagnosed** and are unaware of their infection.
- We are protecting children from hepatitis B as **93% of babies born in the NT have received the vaccination**.
- Hepatitis B is one of the most common risk factors for **liver cancer** – the fastest growing cause of cancer deaths in Australia.
- Currently Routine blood tests do NOT screen for the hepatitis virus – patients must request it.
- We need hepatitis B and C blood screening to be standard in medical clinics, so that every Australian knows their hepatitis B status and can get appropriate treatment and care.
- Knowing more about hepatitis B and hepatitis C and sharing information could save lives and prevent people developing serious liver disease or cancer. **Contact** Heplink Australia www.heplink.au on **1800 437 222 (1800 HEP ABC)** to get information wherever you live.

Download **World Hepatitis Day** [Factsheet](#) for more information and sources.