

# Hepatitis C Virus

**More than 230 000 Australians are chronically infected with Hepatitis C virus (HCV)<sup>1</sup>, however only 1% of these persons currently is on treatment. If the patient is not treated, 5 – 20% will go on to develop cirrhosis after 20 years and be at risk of complications including liver failure and hepatocellular carcinoma.**

There are six main genotypes of HCV, genotypes 1 – 6, and each can be further subdivided, e.g. 1a, 1b. The genotypes guide individual treatment plans.

The standard treatment for HCV infection has been combination of pegylated interferon alfa and ribavirin with the addition of a viral protease inhibitor for genotype 1 individuals. Cure rates are above 70% but many patients are ineligible or intolerant due to treatment related toxicity.

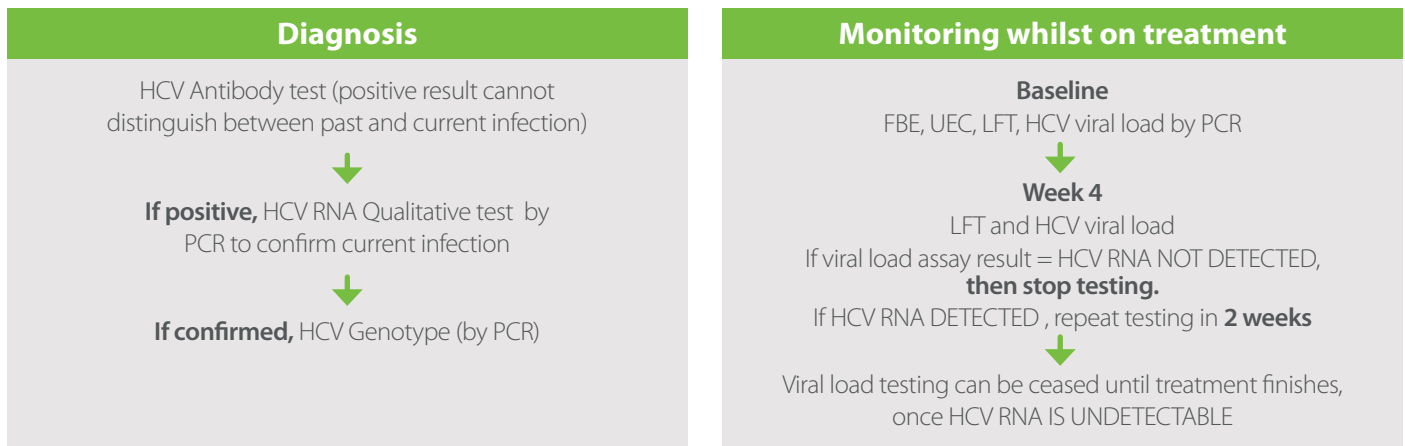
**As of March 1 2016, three new drugs have been added on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for treatment of HCV. These agents are direct acting antivirals, DAAs, and are expected to revolutionize treatment for chronic HCV.**

- Sofosbuvir (Sovaldi)
- Ledipasvir/sofosbuvir (Harvoni)
- Daclatasvir (Daklinza)

These DAA's are more effective, resulting in a cure for 90% of infected people. They are taken as tablets only (not injections), have very little side effects, and can be taken for as little as 8 – 12 weeks for most people (as opposed to 12 – 48 weeks).

The goal of treatment is to eradicate the virus. Effectiveness of treatment is measured through ongoing blood tests to monitor viral load.

## TESTING ALGORITHM:



**Medicare Guidelines** • Hepatitis C Genotype – reimbursed: 1 test every 365 days • Hepatitis C Quantitative – reimbursed.  
• Hepatitis C Qualitative PCR reimbursed: 1 test every 365 days if NOT ON treatment. 4 tests every 365 days if ON treatment.

Dorevitch Pathology provides in-house testing for HCV – from antibodies, through to PCR (quantitative and qualitative) and genotyping in our Infectious Disease Molecular laboratory. Our highly sensitive assays with their rapid turn around times gives you confidence in the results at key medical decision points.

**For further information please contact our Clinical Microbiologists on 9244 0339**

1. Thompson, A and Holmes, V (2015). Treating hepatitis C - what's new. Aust. Prescriber 2015; 38(6):191-197.