



HEPATITIS VICTORIA

Yarning about hep B - an awareness and educational program for Victoria Aboriginal communities

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Hep B - the facts

- An estimated 30,000 Aboriginal Australians living with chronic hepatitis B
 - 16% of people in Australia with chronic hep B, (however 2.5% of the Australian population)
- 90% of hep B infections in the Aboriginal community in 20+ age group
- 30 – 39 age group highest rate of hep B acquisition

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Hepatitis B in Aboriginal communities

- DoH Victoria notification data indicates
 - newly acquired hep B rates 5 x times higher in Aboriginal communities
- Community consultation indicates lack of knowledge and awareness of hep B amongst
 - community members
 - health workers

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Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in Victoria

- VACCHO is the peak body representing 27 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) in Victoria, that were set up to service their local Aboriginal Community needs
- The role of VACCHO is to build the capacity of its membership and to advocate for issues on their behalf



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Hepatitis Victoria



- Hepatitis Victoria is the peak not-for-profit community organisation working across the state for people affected by or at risk of viral hepatitis
- Hepatitis Victoria works to:
 - lead and coordinate the Victorian community response to viral hepatitis
 - raise community awareness and prevent transmission of viral hepatitis
 - increase access and referral to quality viral hepatitis information, care, treatment and support
 - work with priority populations: ATSI, custodial, young people

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The Project Aim

- A partnership to raise awareness about hep B in the Victorian Aboriginal community
 - for community members
 - for Health & Community Workers
 - development of culturally appropriate information resource
 - provision of education programs/forums for ACCHO workers in key locations

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The process

- Establishment of a representative Project Steering Committee
 - Hepatitis Victoria
 - VACCHO
 - VAHS
 - Aboriginal community members
- Development of appropriate general awareness messages around hepatitis B
- Development of a series of concept designs

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The process

- Focus testing of key messages resulting in:
 - **Hep B – it's everyone's business**
 - B active
 - B tested
 - B vaccinated
 - B well
- Focus testing of designs resulting in:

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B ACTIVE

Protect yourself!
Using condoms every time you have sex is the best way to prevent hepatitis B (hep B) and other sexually transmissible infections.

If you need drugs, use a new fit for every fit and don't share any of the equipment.

Maintain a healthy diet

- Limit your fat intake.
- Limit salt intake.
- Eat more fruits, veggies and whole grains.

Reduce your alcohol intake
For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces your risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime.

Quit smoking
Smoking damages your health and can cause liver damage.

Exercise
Activity is good for you and your liver – join in on activity that both you and your family enjoy.

B TESTED

Testing for hep B requires a quick and easy blood test. You can be tested at your local health service.

The tests can determine:

- If you have been vaccinated.
- If you have acute (short term) or chronic (long term) hep B.
- Which stage of chronic (long term) hep B you might be in.

Your doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker can help explain the results of your tests.

This could be a good time to get the rest of your family tested and vaccinated.

B WELL

People living with HIV or hep C.

People who inject drugs.

People who live in the same house as someone living with hep B.

Vaccinations are available at your local Aboriginal Health Service.

To manage your hepatitis you can aim to:

- Keep to your medication schedule, as directed by your doctor.
- Reduce or stop alcohol use.
- Manage stress through meditation, yoga, or massage.
- Use complementary therapies with the help of a qualified health professional.
- Maintain active family, social and cultural connections.
- Exercise and drink lots of water.

Enjoying a healthy diet can help to:

- Give your body the nutrients needed to maintain liver health.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Reduce symptoms of hepatitis, such as raised liver enzymes.
- Reduce the risk of many other health problems, such as heart disease and some cancers.

B VACCINATED

All babies are offered hep B vaccinations at birth (since 2000).

Vaccination for hep A and hep B is recommended for all people with hep C. Hep B vaccination involves 3 injections: **Now**, in **1 month**, and **6 months** after the first injection.

All Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are encouraged to get vaccinated. Especially:

IT'S EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

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Awareness workshops

- Part 2 – six hepatitis B Awareness Forums
- Aimed at health and community workers from Aboriginal Health Services; community members also welcome to attend
- Held in key locations within the VACCHO member network
 - Robinvale
 - Lakes Entrance
 - Horsham
 - Echuca
 - Melbourne (VAHS)
 - Dandenong

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Awareness workshops

- Partnership approach
 - Hep Vic, VACCHO, VAHS
- The content
 - the facts
 - testing, vaccination and treatment
 - clinical strategies
 - screening and recall systems including proformas for assessment and recall

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Learnings from the project

- 5,000 brochures (and posters) distributed to community members and health professionals
- The benefit of partnership
 - technical accuracy
 - cultural appropriateness
 - community access
- Knowledge raised = action taken with clients
- Unknown whether changes in clinical practice or audit of health service files – follow up required

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Acknowledgements

- Hepatitis Australia (funding)
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- VACCHO Koori Maternity Services
- VACCHO member organisations
- Aboriginal Community members

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