

BREAKTHROUGH HEP C TREATMENT AFTER 20 YEARS

After 20 years of living with Hepatitis C, 47 year-old Sydney based Aboriginal man Toby has recently begun new treatments which offer a cure for most people.

With few side effects, the new direct acting antivirals (DAAs) are available and affordable to anyone over 18 years with a Medicare card. For Toby, there have been no problems or negative side effects from the new medicine.

Toby found out that he had hep C after being tested during an admission to hospital for problems related to drug use, and says he contracted hep C from a friend.

Even though Toby says he doesn't feel that having hep C made a big impact on his physical health, he does say that it impacted him mentally, and he is happy to now be receiving treatment.

"It (having hep C), played with my head a bit, but that's all," he says.

"I did a lot of damage to my health with drugs and I'm just starting on the hep C treatment now. I'm about half way through, two months to go, it's been really good."

"The medicine's been excellent," says Toby, "no side effects at all. I haven't had any problems."

Toby says he found out about the new treatments from people at the Kirketon Road Centre in inner Sydney, and encourages others to get tested and treated for hep C.

"I think it's all important to get tested, because who wants it (hep C)?" he says.

"I'd encourage other people to ask about this treatment, I'd say you'd be silly to miss the opportunity for treating hep C."

The DAAs have been available on the PBS since 1 March 2016. Anyone living in Australia who has a Healthcare Card can access the new treatments. There are no restrictions, so you can access the treatment even if you are injecting drugs or have liver damage.

The DAAs are a breakthrough in treating Hepatitis C because they can cure up to 95% or more of people who take them. The treatments are given via tablet form with no need for injections. The treatment lasts, in most cases, for 8 - 12 weeks.

For more information on the new treatments talk to your doctor, your AMS or call the Hepatitis Infoline 1800 803 990.

You can also find out more by visiting the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW website <http://www.ahmrc.org.au/hepc.php> or Hepatitis NSW <https://www.hep.org.au/hep-c-treatment/>