

# hep B newsletter

Issue 2, February 2016

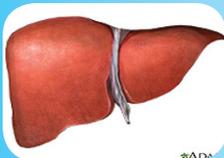
*Welcome to the second issue of the hep B newsletter. This newsletter was made for people living with hepatitis B in New Zealand to give up-to-date information. The Foundation will send out these newsletters from time to time for your interest.*

## Why is the liver so important?

The liver is the second largest organ in the body and performs 500 different functions, making it an organ vital to our health.

These are just a few of the functions of the liver:

- It makes bile which helps digest your food.
- Breaks food down into nutrients and provides glucose for energy.
- Removes toxic chemicals from your blood by providing the body with a natural detox system.
- It also plays a role in helping blood clot (that's why you stop bleeding shortly after being cut.)



## Monitoring your liver:

- **Blood tests:** You should have regular blood tests every six months to check whether the hepatitis B has become active and whether you need treatment. Blood tests can also detect liver disease.

NOTE: It is important for patients to take their blood test form with them to the blood testing lab.

**FibroScan:** A FibroScan provides information about the health of your liver. It is a simple, painless tool that determines if liver damage (fibrosis or cirrhosis)

is present. It measures the degree of stiffness in the liver. The Foundation will offer a FibroScan to those who may require it.

## Liver quiz

- 1 How can you tell if your liver is healthy?**
  - a) Blood tests
  - b) X-rays
- 2 Your liver is about the size of a:**
  - a) Soccer ball
  - b) Rugby ball
  - c) Golf ball
- 3 Hepatitis B is spread through bodily fluid and blood-to-blood contact:**
  - a) True
  - b) False
- 4 Does heavy drinking increase your chances of developing cirrhosis/scarring of the liver?**
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 5 Is there a cure for Hepatitis B?**
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 6 Are there any treatments which can help?**
  - a) Yes
  - b) No

# Meet Fleur Easter, the Foundation's new dedicated South Island hepatitis B nurse.

The Hepatitis Foundation of New Zealand has launched a community based hepatitis B follow-up programme in the South Island. Fleur Easter, our new South Island Community Hepatitis Nurse, is kick-starting the programme by working with local health professionals to educate and support hepatitis B patients.



Fleur's role will initially involve working closely with general practices, specialists and other health providers to see how the Foundation's community based programme can help them. She will also focus on educating patients and family members about taking care of themselves with chronic hepatitis B. She will do this through running a Christchurch based clinic and visiting patients in their homes. Fleur says it is important to maximise prevention and positive patient outcomes.

*"We are looking at education and decreasing people's risk of potentially developing liver complications."*

- People should get tested for hepatitis B if they are over 25 years and of Māori, Pacific or Asian ethnicity.
- Other risk factors include living with someone who has hepatitis B or people whose mother or close family member has hepatitis B.

## Hepatitis B facts:

- Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world.
- It is the leading cause of liver cancer.
- About 100,000 people in New Zealand are chronically infected with the virus.

Hepatitis B is spread through blood-to-blood contact and bodily fluids, and is endemic in New Zealand. This virus is one of the main causes of liver cancer in New Zealand, however in most cases, liver cancer is preventable if detected early.

## Liver quiz answers

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. a - Blood tests   | year through their immune system  |
| 2. b - Rugby ball  |   |
| 3. a - True  | 6. a -Yes, there are treatments which can be prescribed for those patients who require it |
| 4. a - Yes   |   |
| 5. b - No, but approximately 1 percent will clear the virus each |   |

## The Hepatitis Foundation of New Zealand

Call the Hepatitis Foundation on 0800 33 20 10  
[www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz](http://www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz)

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