

HEPATITIS B, VISA AND MIGRATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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In collaboration with



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GLOSSARY

Australian Defence Force: The military organisation responsible for the defence of the Commonwealth of Australia and its national interests

Bupa Medical Visa Services: A health service that operates medical centres around Australia on behalf of Immigration Departments to provide health examinations to visa applicants.

Department of Home Affairs: The Australian Government interior ministry with responsibilities for national security, protective services, emergency management, border control, immigration, refugees, citizenship, transport security and multicultural affairs.

Dependent Visa: (Sometimes referred to as a family visa) is a specific type of visa which allows for family members to join you if you are coming to Australia to work or study on a temporary basis.

Exposure-Prone Procedures: Procedures where there is a risk of injury to the HCW resulting in exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood of the HCW.

Healthcare Worker (HCW): Someone who delivers care and services to the sick and ailing either directly as doctors and nurses or indirectly as aides, helpers, laboratory technicians, or even medical waste handlers.

Hepatitis B Virus: is an infection that may cause inflammation of the liver, cirrhosis, liver failure, and hepatocellular carcinoma.

Hepatitis B Voices Australia: The first hepatitis B community-led organisation that is wholly led by people affected by hepatitis B in Australia.

Legal Advice: The giving of a professional or formal opinion regarding the substance or procedure of the law in relation to a particular factual situation.

Liver Transplant: A surgery to replace a damaged liver with a functioning liver from another person/donor.

LiverWELL: A non-profit-organisation that works to support individuals affected by or at risk of viral hepatitis and liver disease.

Medical Practitioner: An individual who practices a health profession (e.g., doctors) and is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law.

One Fails, All Fail: A requirement that states that all applicants under the family unit must meet the health criteria. If one member of a family unit does not meet the health criteria (either PIC 4005 or 4007, depending on the visa subclass), the entire application will be refused.

Permanent Visa: A type of visa which allows the holder to remain indefinitely.

Private Health Insurance: A policy that covers some of the costs of treatment in clinics or hospitals as a private patient. It can also help pay for healthcare costs that Medicare doesn't cover.

Prescription: An instruction written by a medical practitioner that authorizes a patient to be issued with a medicine or treatment.

S100 Prescriber: A general practitioner, community-based medical practitioner, or nurse practitioner who has completed the Hepatitis B S100 Prescriber Course to be accredited to prescribe S100 drugs for the treatment of hepatitis B virus.

Temporary Visa: A type of visa that allows the holder to either stay for a specified period, stay until a specified event happens, or stay while the holder has a specified status.

Viral Load: The amount of virus in an infected person's blood.

This publication is intended as a general guide for individuals living with hepatitis B, people who know someone living with or affected by hepatitis B, or those looking for general information on visa resources relating to hepatitis B. It is recommended that you talk to a registered migration agent or lawyer about your particular situation and to obtain tailored advice. Additionally, individuals should speak with their healthcare provider for clinical advice on managing hepatitis B and to ensure they receive appropriate medical care.

The information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. This publication is made available on the understanding that, as a result of providing this information, the authors or organisations are not engaged in providing professional advice.

VISA HEALTH REQUIREMENT

Most of the visa applicants are required to meet health requirements imposed by Australian migration law for the issue of a visa or other migration status. The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for visa processing. It also includes determining if the costs associated with treating and supporting a person living with the health condition will result in a 'significant cost' to the Australian community or prejudice access to services for current Australian citizens and permanent residents. If the estimated costs of health or community services exceed the 'significant cost threshold' the government may refuse a visa application. Additionally, as part of the health requirements, the Department assesses whether an individual poses a public health risk to the Australian community. There are processes in place for reviewing decisions related to visa applications, and a limited number of visas allow applicants to apply for a 'waiver' of the health requirement.

For more information, please visit [Meeting our health requirement](#)

VISA HEALTH REQUIREMENT AND HEPATITIS B

Previously, the costs associated with the treatment of hepatitis B meant that historically some applicants living with hepatitis B were refused a visa. However, recent changes to the cost threshold and a reduction in the cost of hepatitis B medication in Australia mean that most applicants living with hepatitis B, including those on treatment, should no longer fail the visa health requirement due to their hepatitis B status and expected costs of treatment. Applicants are still required to meet all other visa criteria.

Generally, hepatitis B is NOT considered a public health threat to the Australian community according to migration law. However, applicants intending to study or work as a doctor, nurse, dentist or paramedic (healthcare workers) may be required to provide additional information and/or meet additional requirements when applying for a visa **(see below section ‘I have hepatitis B and I am planning to study in Australia. Will this impact my visa application?’)**

While these changes are generally positive for applicants living with hepatitis B, the department consider a wide range of health conditions as relevant to the assessment of the health requirement. This means that applicants living with hepatitis B who are also living with other health conditions, or whose hepatitis B requires management may not meet the relevant health requirements.

Will I be refused a temporary visa due to my hepatitis B status?

Most applicants living with hepatitis B will not fail the health requirement when applying for a temporary visa to Australia. As mentioned by the Department of Home Affairs, in some circumstances, there may be additional steps or requirements for temporary visa applicants living with hepatitis B who are planning to study or work as a healthcare worker, including as a doctor, nurse, dentist, or paramedic.

(See below section ‘I have hepatitis B and I am planning to study in Australia. Will this impact my visa application?’)

Will I be refused permanent residency due to my hepatitis B status?

Most applicants living with hepatitis B should not fail the health requirement when applying for permanent residency. This includes people living with hepatitis B that require treatment.

However, visa health requirements consider a wide range of health conditions as relevant to its assessment. This means that applicants living with hepatitis B who also have other health conditions, or whose hepatitis B requires complex management, may not meet the relevant health requirements.

Therefore, it is essential for applicants to obtain tailored advice from a registered migration agent or lawyer about what impact their hepatitis B and any other health conditions may have on their visa application. It is always important to discuss an appropriate plan/strategy for visa applications and pathways to permanent residency before applying for a visa.

Is there any impact on my stay in Australia if I am diagnosed with Hepatitis B?

A diagnosis of hepatitis B should not lead to the cancellation of your current visa or affect your stay in Australia. However, it is important to emphasize that if you have hepatitis B, receiving regular care is important to protect your health. Early diagnosis and ongoing management can significantly reduce the risk of serious complications, such as cirrhosis or end-stage liver disease. Avoiding diagnosis and care can increase these health risks. Therefore, it's essential to get regular medical care to maintain your health and well-being.

What other reasons could lead to a visa rejection for someone with hepatitis B?

If an applicant with chronic hepatitis B develops end-stage liver disease and is likely to require a liver transplant, their visa application may exceed the 'significant cost threshold.' Additionally, it raises concerns about equitable access to limited medical resources, such as liver transplants from deceased donors, which could impact availability for Australian patients.

For more information, please visit [Hepatitis B and Immigration](#)

I do not have hepatitis B, but my family member or dependent does. Will it affect our visa application?

All people included in the visa application as well as some non-migrating family members and dependents may also be required to meet the relevant health requirement. If one member of a family unit does not meet the health requirement, the application will be refused. This is known as the '**one fails, all fail**' policy.

As noted above, a family member living with hepatitis B is unlikely to fail the health requirement due to their hepatitis B status alone. However, visa health requirements consider a wide range of health conditions as relevant to its assessment. **(For more information about hepatitis B and the health requirement, see above).**

I have hepatitis B and I am planning to study in Australia. Will this impact my visa application?

Generally, applicants living with hepatitis B will not be refused a visa due to their hepatitis B status.

However, applicants intending to study to become a healthcare worker that perform exposure prone procedures (doctors, nurses, dentists, paramedics) may be required to do additional health examinations and/or provide additional information to the Department of Home Affairs. You may be asked to provide a statement from your employer or educational institution stating that you will not be undertaking exposure-prone procedures.

As long as you are complying with the requirements of the [Australian National Guidelines](#), you should not be prevented from pursuing study or employment as a healthcare worker in Australia, even if you are living with hepatitis B.

It is strongly advised that applicants in these circumstances obtain advice from a registered migration agent or lawyer that has experience in health-related visa matters.

For more information, please visit [CDNA National Guidelines](#).

HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

All permanent visa applicants and some temporary visa applicants will be required to undergo a health examination. The specific tests required depend on various factors, including the type of visa applied for (e.g., the applicant's intended work or study), the length of the visa, the country the applicant is migrating from, the applicant's age, and the information provided to the Department of Home Affairs in the visa application. However, a general health examination may include:

- Urine test
- Blood pressure check
- Blood test (TB screening test, HIV test, Hepatitis B and C tests, and a Syphilis test)
- Eyesight – read letters from a chart
- Weight and Height– to determine your body mass index (BMI)
- Heart check
- Reflexes check – on the legs
- Ears and throat
- Lumps underarms and belly
- Chest X-ray.

For more information, please visit [What health examinations you need](#)

Does a tourist visa require a medical examination?

Generally, short-term temporary residence visas, such as tourist visas, will not require a health examination. There are some exceptions to this, for example, if you are over the age of 75 or if you intend to stay in Australia for the next 6 to 12 months.

The health examination and the types of tests required depend on the type and length of your visa, country of origin, age, and the details in your visa application. You will be notified if a health examination is needed after you submit your application.

Should I disclose my hepatitis B status during the visa application process?

It is important to answer any questions honestly during a visa application process, and not to provide any misleading or false information to the department. Some questions may ask you directly about any health conditions you are living with while others may ask about any healthcare services you intend on accessing while in Australia related to a health condition. Before lodging an application, advice should be sought from a registered migration agent or lawyer. It is recommended that a person living with hepatitis B should discuss/disclose their condition and other significant information to their lawyer or migration agent so that they can provide accurate advice.

For more information, please visit [Who do you have to tell?](#)

Where can I undergo a health examination?

Medical tests for Australian temporary and permanent residency can be undertaken in Australia or at approved locations in other countries. If an applicant lives in Australia, you must undergo testing through the authorised migration-related health examination provider (currently this is Bupa Medical Visa Services). If an applicant needs to undergo a health examination outside Australia, it is required that the examination be conducted by one of the Department of Home Affairs' approved panel physicians or clinics at approved locations outside Australia.

For more information, please visit [Preparing for Your Immigration Health Examination](#)

What considerations should I be aware of when applying for a new visa in Australia if I am pregnant and have hepatitis B?

If you are in Australia on a visa, you can access care for yourself and your baby during pregnancy, birth, and afterwards. However, the cost will depend on your visa type and the coverage of your private health insurance.

If you have hepatitis B and are pregnant, it is important to see your doctor early to monitor your liver health, viral load, and assess if treatment is needed. Discussing your health condition with your midwife or doctor will help manage hepatitis B and ensure both you and your baby stay healthy.

It is strongly advised that applicants in these circumstances seek advice from a registered migration agent or lawyer to discuss about disclosing their pregnancy status before submitting the application, as the applicant or dependent may be required to sign a pregnancy health undertaking if a health examination is needed.

For more information, please visit [Hepatitis B, Pregnancy and Babies](#), [Pregnancy Health Undertaking](#), [Me, my baby and hepatitis B](#)



MEDICATION

Can I bring my hepatitis B medication to Australia? Will the immigration officer stop me if they find my medicine?

Australia has strict regulations regarding the importation of medications, so it is essential to be aware of the rules to avoid any issues at immigration. Customs will not prevent you from bringing your hepatitis B medication into Australia if it aligns with the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) guidelines and you correctly declare it upon arrival.

It is important to make sure you have a valid prescription for your medication. It should be in English and include details such as your name, the name of the medication (e.g. Entecavir or Tenofovir) dosage instructions, and your doctor's contact information. Additionally, having a letter from your doctor explaining the medical necessity of the medication may be helpful. It should include details about your condition, the need for the specific medication, and the prescribed dosage. Alternatively, if the medication is not restricted in Australia a maximum of 3 months' supply can be imported from overseas.

For more information, please visit [Entering Australia](#)

Can I buy hepatitis B medication in Australia with a prescription from overseas?

You cannot use a prescription provided by a medical practitioner from your own country to purchase medication in Australia. If you have run out of hepatitis B medication (eg. entecavir or tenofovir) or need medication during your stay in Australia, you may visit an Australian approved general medical practitioner (known as s100 prescribers) or specialist physician to obtain a valid Australian prescription. The prescription can be used to purchase medication from Australian pharmacies.

For more information, please visit [Travelling to or from Australia with medicines and medical devices, Personal Importation Scheme](#)

To find an S100 prescriber, click here <https://ashm.org.au/prescriber-programs/find-a-prescriber/b-referred-prescriber-map/>

HEPATITIS B MANAGEMENT

Can I buy hepatitis B medication in Australia with a prescription from overseas?

After arriving in Australia, to manage your hepatitis B care, you should:

- Find a local health care provider who can help manage your hepatitis B and monitor your health. In Australia, hepatitis B care can be provided by a GP or a specialist.
- Schedule regular appointments for hepatitis B monitoring, including blood tests, liver function tests, and ultrasounds if needed, as advised by your healthcare provider.
- If you are currently on treatment, don't interrupt or stop taking your hepatitis B medication unless you have been advised to by a health care provider.
- Reach out to local support groups or community organizations for additional resources and support, including LiverWELL, Hepatitis B Voices Australia, and other support organizations.

For more information, please visit [LiverWELL](#), [Hepatitis B Voices Australia](#), [HepBCommunity.org](#)

WORKING IN AUSTRALIA

Do I need to disclose my Hepatitis B status to my employer?

For most jobs, there is no need to disclose to your employer or colleagues that you are living with hepatitis B. However, there are a small number of professions that may require you to disclose your status or undergo a blood test. These include:

- If you are a healthcare worker performing exposure-prone procedures (EPPs).
- If you work for or are applying to join the Australian Defence Force.

Some jobs may also require you to provide evidence that you have been immunized for hepatitis B. If you are already living with chronic hepatitis B, you should consult with a doctor regarding this requirement. They can write a supporting letter to your employer explaining the minimal risks associated with your condition and confirming your suitability for the job.

If you are denied employment or are dismissed by an employer because of your hepatitis B status, you should seek appropriate legal advice or consider filing a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The AHRC offers a free complaint process that doesn't require legal representation and may include mediation as part of the resolution process.

For more information, please visit [Know your rights.](#)

To file a complaint, click here <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/complaint-information-service/complaint-process-complaints-about-sex-race-disability-and#Heading26>

I am a healthcare worker living with Hepatitis B. Can I perform Exposure-Prone Procedures (EPPs)?

Healthcare workers living with hepatitis B may be required to provide additional information to the Department of Home Affairs if intending to work in Australia. It's important to note that a hepatitis B infection alone does not automatically disqualify someone from working as a healthcare worker, or from working in a role where they perform EPPs. However, the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) guidelines must be followed. Presently, healthcare workers living with hepatitis B are permitted to perform EPPs if their viral load is below 200 IU/mL, and they meet the criteria set out in relevant policies and guidelines.

For more information, please visit [CDNA guidelines](#).

LEGAL ADVICE

For specialist advice, people living with hepatitis B can contact HALC to obtain information or advice about hepatitis B-related legal matters, including migration. HALC is a community legal centre based in New South Wales that can provide free legal services to people living with health conditions, such as hepatitis B.

Email: halc@halc.org.au

Ph: (02) 9492 6540

For more information, please visit [HALC](#)

REFERENCES

[The complaint process for complaints about sex, race, disability and age discrimination](#), Australian Human Rights Commission

[CDNA National Guidelines for healthcare workers on managing bloodborne viruses](#), Department of Health and Aged Care

[Entering Australia](#), Department of Health and Aged Care

[Find a hepatitis B s100 community prescriber](#), ASHM

[Hepatitis B and Immigration](#), ASHM

[Hepatitis B, Pregnancy and Babies](#), Hep NSW

[Me, my baby and hepatitis B](#), St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

[Meeting our health requirement](#), Department of Home Affairs

[Know your rights](#), LiverWELL

[Pregnancy Health Undertaking](#), Department of Home Affairs

[Preparing for your immigration health examination](#), Bupa Medical Visa Services

[Travelling to or from Australia with medicines and medical devices](#), Department of Health and Aged Care

[What health examinations you need](#), Department of Home Affairs

[Who do you have to tell?](#) Hepatitis Australia