



you with emotional issues, learn about ways to stay healthy, and the current treatments. There are also many organizations that offer information on HCV. Some of these groups are listed below:

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/>

American Liver Foundation

<http://www.liverfoundation.org>

Hepatitis Foundation International

<http://www.hepfi.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Hepatitis_C

Hepatitis C Support Project

<http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hcsp/hcsp.asp>

Hepatitis Central

<http://www.hepatitis-central.com>

Transmission of Hepatitis

Hepatitis A and E are spread by the consumption of fecally contaminated food, milk, or water. Hepatitis B, C, and D are spread by exposure to blood/blood products or secretion of an infected person, and at birth by an infected mother to her infant.

This teaching aid may be photocopied by healthcare professionals for use in their clinical practice.

Attach your business card here, then copy.

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Guide to Care for patients

Hepatitis C

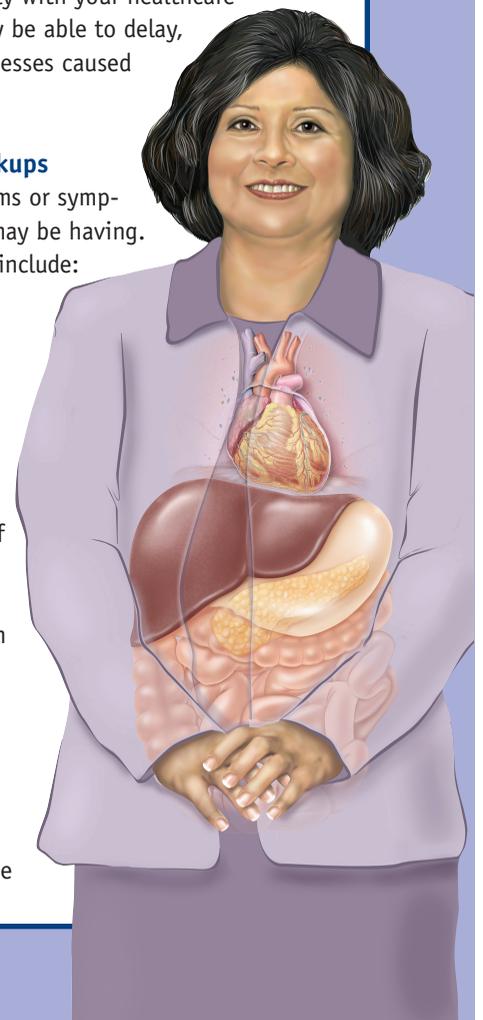
Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is an infection in the blood that can damage the liver, kidneys, and other body organs. Although HCV may take many years to make someone sick, by staying healthy and working closely with your healthcare providers, you may be able to delay, if not prevent, illnesses caused by HCV.

Get regular checkups

Report any problems or symptoms of HCV you may be having.

Symptoms of HCV include:

- feeling tired
- nausea
- weight loss
- yellowish eyes and skin, called jaundice
- a longer than usual amount of time for bleeding to stop
- swollen stomach or ankles
- easy bruising
- fever
- diarrhea
- light-colored stools
- dark yellow urine



Remember to tell your healthcare provider about ANY medicines you are taking (either prescribed medication or over-the-counter medicines including acetaminophen (Tylenol), vitamins, supplements, or herbs). Certain medicines can affect your liver.

Be sure to get all the lab tests your healthcare provider recommends. Ask about the results of tests and what they can tell about your HCV infection.

Live healthy

Fibrosis is the medical term for scar tissue in the liver. Fibrosis is caused by infection, inflammation, or injury. This scar tissue prevents the liver from working as well as it should. Alcohol causes more fibrosis and damages the liver even further. In a person with hepatitis C, the damage caused by alcohol is greater. Fibrosis can lead to severe scarring (cirrhosis), especially when a person drinks heavily, so stop or cut down on alcohol. Also, be sure to eat a healthy diet that includes a lot of vegetables and fruits and not a lot of sugar and fat. Being overweight can increase your risk of liver damage.



Fast Fact

One way to keep your energy level up is to eat small meals or snacks every 3 to 4 hours. If you are currently on hepatitis C treatment, eating often can help prevent nausea, which is sometimes a side effect of the medicine.

Keep your mind as healthy as your body: rest when you are tired and find positive ways to reduce stress and relax. If you are feeling very anxious or depressed a lot, tell your healthcare provider.

Also, be sure to exercise regularly. Exercise



will help control your weight and help you feel better.

Talking with your healthcare provider

Talk to your healthcare provider about medicines to treat HCV. Many people can benefit from these medicines because they help slow the virus and can reduce damage to the liver.

HCV is most often treated with the drug combination peginterferon and ribavirin, which attacks the hepatitis C virus. Peginterferon is taken through weekly shots and ribavirin is taken daily by mouth. Treatment lasts from 24 to 48 weeks.

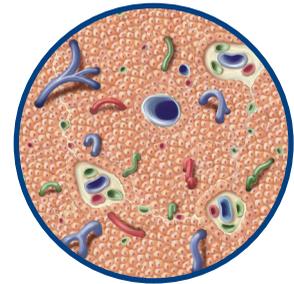
A liver biopsy is the best way to determine how HCV is affecting your liver. Unfortunately, simple blood tests are not as reliable. Although it may be scary, talk to your healthcare provider about the importance of a liver biopsy to find out whether you will benefit from these medicines.

Specific issues to discuss with your healthcare provider include:

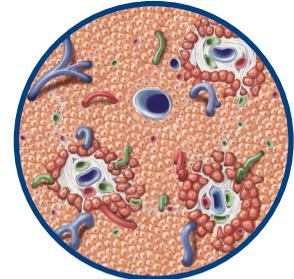
- The types of treatments available, and their risk and benefits.
- Additional risks or benefits of a treatment based on any other health conditions you may have and your HCV infection.
- Potential adverse reactions of the medicines and ways they can be avoided or managed.
- The monitoring needed while you are taking the medicine (blood work, checkups).
- Patient assistance programs that can help you pay for the medicines.

For more information

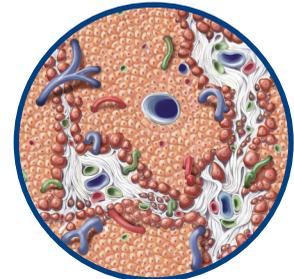
Try to learn as much as you can about HCV. You may want to consider joining a support group. This is a great way to find others who can help



normal biopsy



mild hepatitis biopsy



moderate hepatitis biopsy