

# Living With Hepatitis

Spring 2008

For questions regarding this tip sheet, please contact the Hepatitis Support Group - Champaign County Chapter  
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Treatment Tips  
 Product of the Hepatitis Support Group - Champaign County Chapter



## HEPATITIS Treatment Tips

201 West Kenyon Road  
 Champaign, IL 61820

www.cuphd.org

217.239.7827

### Attend the Hepatitis Support Group:

**GOAL:** To provide support and education to patients, and families of patients, with Hepatitis C or any other form of Hepatitis.

**WHEN:** The Hepatitis Support Group meets the second Wednesday of every month from 6:00 - 7:30pm.

**WHERE:** The Forum at Carle, Fritz Room, 611 West Park Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**NOTE:** Snacks are provided.

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**Public Health**  
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 Hepatitis Support Group  
 -Champaign County Chapter -

# Treatment Tips



Spring 2008

Issue One

## Tips by Patients for Patients

The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide information to those thinking about or currently undergoing Hepatitis treatment. A combination of current and former Hepatitis patients who have experienced treatment have provided these unique, personalized words of advice.

### Fatigue, Depression, Mood Swings, and Stress

- Eat Healthy. If you have never tried to eat a balanced diet, this is a good time to try. Eating well can make a big difference in how you feel.
- It is normal to feel fatigued and stressed during treatment. You are taking strong medication to help you fight this disease.
- Remember you are stronger than you may feel.
- You will feel better if you get some mild exercise (go for a walk, take a yoga class, go for a relaxing bike ride).
- Hepatitis treatment can worsen symptoms of depression or bring on feelings of depression. It is important to speak with your doctor about symptoms before starting treatment.
- If you begin feeling depressed during treatment, let your doctor know immediately.



*"Undergoing treatment is a commitment, so make sure you get any questions answered to gain confidence that you can conquer this challenge and get healthy."*



- Tell your doctor if you are having trouble sleeping.
- When you feel tired, don't fight it. Just sleep. It is important that you do not overwork yourself. The treatment is already stressful, so try to reduce stress in other areas of your life.
- Try to make arrangements in advance in case you may need to be off work to rest and get well.
- Warn those closest to you that you may experience mood swings.

- Be mindful of whom you share information about your illness. Remember, you have nothing to be ashamed of, but you should be aware that some people are ignorant to the facts about Hepatitis C. Choose your support system wisely.
- Try to keep positive. Focus on getting well.
- A good support network will help you get through challenges.
- Accept help from friends and family.

### Recommendations Vaccinations & Tests

Hepatitis A & B Vaccines and HIV testing are highly recommended and offered at the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District. For more information, please call 217.352.7961 or visit CUPHD on the web at www.cuphd.org.



- Take advantage of helpline resources, support groups and websites.

### Flu-like Symptoms and Nausea

- Saltine crackers and room temperature ginger ale are good to have when taking medicine. This helps with nausea.
- Soda crackers are a good snack option that may reduce feelings of nausea and also make you thirsty (which would help with drinking more water).
- The medication may make you dizzy, so plan ahead if you need to drive. Think about not driving until you know how you react to the medication.
- Vision may be affected in the form of floaters or spots in the eye.

*"Most important tip to note: Drink plenty of water during treatment."*

### Healthy Eating

Healthy Eating Tips.....Page 2  
 Basic Tips to Make the Best Food Choices for your Health and Treatment.

# Additional Tips

*"Your liver detoxifies your body. So don't ingest anything that puts extra strain on your liver such as alcohol, fatty foods, etc."*

## Healthy Eating Tips

- Changes in smell and taste are normal. Try to eat what is appealing in small quantities during the day.

- If cooking smells bother you, use ventilation fans and try setting up a fan where you eat to blow away smells while eating or ask friends and family to help with cooking.

- Cook more food when you feel well, freeze leftovers in serving size portions and microwave leftovers later.

- Eat healthy prepared foods, canned soups, and frozen foods.

- Try eating foods cold or at room temperature.

- Avoid greasy, fatty and really spicy foods - they can make you feel sick.

- Other healthy snack options are berries with cereal and skim milk for breakfast and snacks of apples with low fat cottage cheese and crackers, nuts, dried fruit, frozen yogurt, sorbets, and fruit popsicles.

- Sometimes raw vegetables and salads are hard to digest. Lightly steamed vegetables may be better.

- If you have trouble digesting whole grains and raw vegetables, try foods that won't encourage diarrhea, like yogurt, cottage cheese, peanut butter, hard boiled eggs, skinless chicken, turkey, ham, very lean cuts of meat and fish.

- If you get diarrhea, drink lots of liquids like apricot nectar, Gatorade, or Vitamin water and try to eat foods with potassium like bananas, canned peaches, boiled or mashed potatoes.

- If you are constipated, drink even more clear fluids and try Fiber Sure.

- Drink plenty of water. Divide your weight by 1/2. This is the number of ounces



of water you need to drink per day.

## Miscellaneous Tips:

- Get a flu vaccine.

- Get a pneumonia vaccine if you are 65 years old or older.

- Ask about getting Hepatitis A and B vaccines.

**The liver is a remarkable organ and can regenerate. If a person becomes free of the Hepatitis virus, the amount of scarring can decrease, which greatly improves the health of the liver.**



- Try to avoid people who have colds or the flu and are contagious because the Hepatitis treatment lowers your immune system.

- Wash your hands often.

- Avoid breathing harsh chemical fumes like strong cleaners, paintes, solvents, etc.

- Try to avoid taking painkillers by using cold/hot packs for aches and pains.

- Try not to smoke (ask about Chantix / Varencline prescription).

- Do not drink alcohol - not even a little beer or wine.

- Do not smoke marijuana. It can interfere with the effectiveness of the treatment.

- Do not use drugs to get high.

- Be honest with your doctors and nurses. If you need help avoiding alcohol and drugs, ask for it.

## Be Informed about Hepatitis C

- Normal liver enzyme levels DO NOT mean the disease is under control.

- Low levels of Hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the blood do NOT correlate with control of the disease.

- Once you have Hepatitis, you will always test positive for the antibodies even if you have undergone successful treatment.

- When viral counts of the virus are non-detectable, you are free of the virus.

- HCV can be transmitted through direct blood-to-blood contact, which includes intravenous and intranasal drug use.

- A liver biopsy is considered the most precise procedure we have today for evaluating the health of the liver. It measures the degree of liver inflammation and staging of fibrosis for predicting disease progression and treatment outcome. A biopsy is assigned a number based on the degree of inflammation from 0=no scarring to 4=cirrhosis or advanced scarring of the liver.

**Dealing with Change**  
Body Change Tips.....Page 3  
Basic Tips to Make Physical Changes and Transitions Easier!



## Changes to Skin & Mouth

- Minor cases of eczema or psoriasis can get worse during treatment.

- Avoid harsh soaps and cleansers with perfumes, astringents or alcohol.

- Use detergents that are free or perfumes and dyes - like Tide Free, Cheer Free or Arm & Hammer for Sensitive Skin.

- Avoid hot water, long baths and bathing everyday because it dries your skin.

- Keep skin and scalp moisturized (Aveeno makes a line of products that contain colloidal oatmeal that is very soothing).

## Changes

*Your body is under extra stress during treatment, so take extra care of your skin by avoiding harsh soaps, cleansers, and detergents..*

- Avoid direct sunlight - the medicine increases your chance of sunburn, so stay in the shade, and wear hats and sunscreen.

- Avoid extreme heat and try to stay cool - use air conditioning, cool compresses, fans, etc.

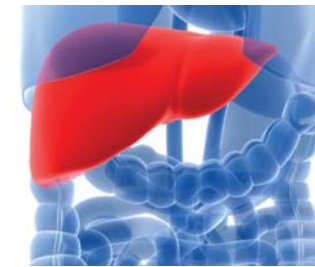
- If you develop a rash, try Benedryl and over the counter hydrocortisone cream. If Benedryl does not resolve the rash, ask your doctor for a prescription for a steroid cream.

- Try wearing soft, light cotton and natural fibers that breathe.

- Avoid scratching - keep finger and toe nails short.

- If you get a yeast infection or other similar problem ask your doctor for help.

- Baby powder and Gold Bond



powder can be helpful.

- Sometimes sores will appear on the tongue, inside the mouth and down the throat. Ask your physician or pharmacist for suggestions.

## Changes to Hair & Nails

- It is normal to experience some thinning and hair loss. Remember it will grow back after treatment. Somethings you can do to lessen hairloss include:

- Avoid washing your hair everyday.

- Use gentle cleansers - Johnson's & Johnson's Head to Toe Baby Wash.

- Try a shorter haircut or tie hair



- up with gentle ties that will not tear hair.

- Use de-tangling conditioners and comb or brush hair gently.

- Avoid harsh chemicals - if you must color your hair, try to use rinses and vegetable-based dyes and avoid dye with harsh chemicals like peroxide and ammonia.

- Along with thinning hair, nails also become thin and brittle. It is best to keep them short

## Need Support?

Attend the Hepatitis Support Group.

**217.239.7827**

# Starting Hepatitis Treatment General Tips

## Plan Ahead!

*Take medication on the weekend and don't plan to be very active the day after injecting Peg-Intron until you know your reaction to the drug.*

- Take medication at the same time every day.

- Administer Peg-Intron at room temperature to decrease stinging upon injection.

- Numb the injection site with a cold pack prior to injection.

- Rotate injection sites every week to decrease chances of injection site reactions such as soreness.

- Take Tylenol + shot at bedtime so you sleep through the initial side effects of the medication.

- Make sure you are comfortable with injecting yourself. If you are nervous about it, schedule to receive shots at the doctor's office until you gain more confidence. It is important not to miss your weekly dose and it is important to take the medication close to the

same time every week.

- Be prepared to potentially feel flu-like symptoms (chills, fever) when starting treatment.

- It is very helpful to have company around when beginning treatment so you can ask for help when you need it. There are many side effects listed, but everyone responds differently. Until you know how you react to the treatment, have a good support system close by.



*"Eat healthy, avoid stress, and take good care of yourself."*