

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET - Feel free to copy this sheet

Hepatitis C: How to reduce risks of disease progression and transmission

Good health habits can help slow down the effects of Hepatitis C:

- Stop drinking alcohol, or limit yourself to only the occasional drink. Drinking alcohol can make HCV-related liver disease worse, and interfere with treatment.
- Maintain a healthy weight and lose weight if your Body Mass Index (BMI) is over 25. Studies show that obesity can speed up liver damage.
- Make sure your vaccinations are up to date. If you're not already immune, get a Hepatitis A and B shot. Many doctors also recommend you get a flu and pneumococcal shot.
- If you are taking ribavirin therapy, practice strict birth control, during the treatment and for six months afterward.
- Exercise regularly. It will help reduce stress or depression and boost your immune system.

Here are some ways to make sure you do not spread the Hepatitis C virus to other people:

- Do not donate blood, semen, tissues or organs.
- Do not share any personal items, such as razors, nail clippers, scissors, and your toothbrush. Be sure to cover any wounds that bleed.
- Discuss your HCV status with your sexual partner or partners.
- If you have sex with more than one person, use condoms during sex-especially during menstruation. Condoms will help prevent the risk of getting other infections, such as HIV or Hepatitis B. Some doctors recommend you should always use condoms, even if you have only one partner. If you use intravenous drugs, take care not to reuse drug equipment. Use new equipment every time you inject.

(Information from Health Canada. Primary Care Management of Hepatitis C: Physicians' Desk Reference and Patient Information Sheet, 2002; SIGN Management of Hepatitis C, A National Clinical Guideline, 2006; Wong T, Lee SS. Hepatitis C: a review for primary care physicians. *CMAJ* 2006; 174(5):649-659).

