



HEPATITIS C LESSONS • PART 10

How to Help Yourself

PURPOSE

To help the people in your group prepare for treatment by putting together the support they will need from many different people. Helping people in your group to get better can also help the people they care about.

FACTS

Support takes many forms. Getting support is a big help to people going through hepatitis C treatment. This includes help from family, friends and support groups.

What kind of support is there and is it enough?

Every person with hepatitis C reacts differently to the diagnosis. Some get angry. Some worry or get sad. Having people around who will let you express your feelings to them before, during, and after treatment can be a comfort.

Think about who you can rely on – friends, family, coworkers, and peers in a support group to lean on while going through treatment. Remember, you don't have to go it alone.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

What kind of support do you have?

Is it enough?

Do you have family, friends, and coworkers who care about you and can support you?

How will you support yourself?

How do you help educate those who support you?

What are your childcare/family-care options?

How do you prepare your family?

Who will do what?

Handout: How to Help Yourself

Here are some sample questions and answers you can use as you like during your meeting

Do you have family support?

When you speak to family members, it's important to explain:

- *What your family can do to help you get through treatment*
- *What they should expect from you in terms of mood, side effects, medicine schedules, healthcare provider visits, and lab tests*

Your family should know that you must keep to the schedule and not miss taking any medicine or miss any lab test appointments. Tell your family that you will also be trying to eat and sleep on a strict schedule.

You might also ask a family member to be a “gatekeeper.” That will allow your family member to discuss any serious problems you are having with the medical team.

How can people getting treatment for hepatitis C support themselves?

People being treated for hepatitis C need support from others. Sometimes, the most important support will come from a support network.

Here are some ways you can help yourself:

- *Try setting aside time for hobbies you enjoy or that help you relax. It could be something as simple as reading or listening to music*
- *Learn as much as you can about hepatitis C: the HCV Advocate Website has detailed information about every aspect of HCV*
- *Rest, eat well, and exercise regularly. You should talk to your healthcare provider*

How can you prepare your family?

- *Tell your family that you're starting a treatment program, and that there's a good chance it will cause changes in the household*
- *Tell them that your treatment is important and that you will need their help and support*
- *Explain to them you're trying to get better because you want to be there for them in the future. But right now, you need them to be there for you*

Who will do what?

Everyone in the family should have a role in helping, even with the household chores.

You may need someone who can make things easier on you, such as someone to:

- *Help prepare meals*
- *Do chores*
- *Run errands*
- *Give you a ride to work*

Again, if you are unable to afford these resources, social services may be able to help. Ask what services are available, such as a Meals On Wheels® program. You will most likely need support during your treatment, so set up help in advance.

Additional support

Hepatitis C Support Project

www.hcvadvocate.org

American Liver Foundation

1-800-GO-LIVER (1-800-465-4837)

www.liverfoundation.org

Caring Ambassadors Hepatitis C Program

1-503-632-9032

www.hepcchallenge.org

Help4Hep

(877) HELP4HEP (877) 435-7443

www.help4hep.org

United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

www.hepatitis.va.gov

Drug company support

The drug companies that make the approved medicines for hepatitis C treatment provide free support programs to help you cope. They also offer educational brochures and pamphlets. They even have healthcare providers who will answer your questions over the telephone.

Review Points

1. Who will be helping you with the support you need? (list names and phone numbers):

Family:

Friends:

Support group:

Childcare:

2. What else do you need help with during treatment:

Getting to and from your healthcare provider's office.

Household chores

Suggested Reading:

HCV Treatment

A Guide to Hepatitis C: Preparing for Treatment

www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Preparing_for_Treatment.pdf

HCV Treatment: Patient Assistance Programs

Help with Medicines (Patient Assistance)

www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/easyfacts/e_Patient_Assistance.pdf

Patient Assistance Programs

www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Patient_Assistance.pdf