



HEPATITIS C LESSONS • PART 8

Next Steps

PURPOSE

To help people in your group understand that they have choices and how to have an informed talk with their healthcare provider.

FACTS

Each person's path moving forward is based on what they and their healthcare provider agree to. The choice is to either treat the virus or to watch and wait.

Anyone considering treatment needs to talk with their doctor to find out about all their options.

- *Direct-acting antiviral (DAA) pills that you take each day*
- *Ribavirin pills that you take as your healthcare provider prescribes*

Treatment for hepatitis C may include different prescription medicines:

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Why is hepatitis C treatment important to you?

What are some lifestyle changes you can make?

Why commit to treatment?

How long can treatment take?

Why do you think some people decide not to get treated for the virus?

Do you know other people who have hepatitis C?

What might happen if you do nothing?

Handout: If you and your healthcare provider are thinking about treatment, what should you plan for?

What if treatment is not an option?

Instead of starting drug treatment, the healthcare provider might suggest making lifestyle changes. These may include following a healthier diet, giving up alcohol, and monitoring (your healthcare provider keeping an eye on your condition). Monitoring doesn't mean doing nothing. It means keeping a close eye on how the liver is doing. It will help

the healthcare provider decide on the next step. You may need to have a test to find out how much liver damage the hepatitis C virus has caused. Even though you and your healthcare provider should work as partners, and it's important to listen to your healthcare provider's opinion, you should always remember the decisions about your body are up to you.

How long will treatment last?

It depends on the genotype (the individual type of hepatitis C virus). There are 7 different genotypes, but genotypes 1, 2, and 3 are the most common in the United States. People in the United States who have hepatitis C mainly have genotype 1. It is the hardest to treat. The treatment time is different for each genotype:

- **Genotype 1:** *Up to 24 weeks, depending on your previous treatment history and how much your liver is damaged (cirrhosis) and responds to treatment*
- **Genotype 2:** *12 weeks*
- **Genotype 3:** *24 weeks*

If the treatment is not working, or if there are issues with side effects, the healthcare provider might stop the treatment.

NOTES

Should you plan for treatment?

You probably don't want to make any big decisions hours or days after you've been told you have hepatitis C. Obviously, you need time to clear your head. When you're ready, answering these questions can help you decide what is your best next step:

- *Can you afford the cost of hepatitis C treatment? Even with insurance, it may be expensive. Check with your insurance company to see what will be covered. Also, make sure you can handle the out-of-pocket costs (the part of the costs that your insurance doesn't cover)*
 - You may qualify for a prescription assistance program (PAP). Visit http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Patient_Assistance.pdf for more information about the programs
- *Does your schedule allow you to have treatment for up to 24 weeks? You may need to make changes:*
 - At work. Most people can work through treatment. But it is always a good idea to plan ahead if you need to take some time off for medical appointments or if you are having days when you don't feel well enough to work. You may need to take sick days or work fewer hours if you are feeling sick during your treatment
 - In your life. For example, people taking ribavirin: if you are male, your partner must not get pregnant while you are being treated and for 6 months after treatment ends. Similarly, if you are a female, you must not get pregnant while you are being treated and for 6 months after treatment ends
- *Are you mentally prepared? This includes having a plan, goals, and people you can rely on so you can be as healthy as possible:*
 - If you have emotional problems or a history of depression, discuss them with your healthcare provider
 - If you have a problem with alcohol or drugs, your medical provider may require that you deal with it before you can begin treatment
 - Discuss with your healthcare provider any medical or emotional issues you have

One more thing: Don't make your decision alone. Talk with family members, close friends, and of course, your healthcare providers. Share what you're thinking and feeling. Have them share what they're thinking and feeling. It will make a big difference.

Review Points

- *What is my genotype? What are my chances for a cure, or clearing the hepatitis C virus?*
- *What are some of the side effects of treatment that most people get?*
- *How should I plan for treatment?*
- *What should I take care of before I start treatment?*

Suggested Reading:

HCV Treatment: FDA-Approved Medications

Genotype 1 Treatment: Harvoni (Sofosbuvir & Ledipasvir)
http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/easyfacts/Harvoni_e.pdf

Genotype1: Harvoni Therapy
http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/GT1_Harvoni.pdf

Genotype 1 Treatment: VIEKIRA PAK
http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/easyfacts/Viekira_e.pdf

Genotype1: VIEKIRA PAK Therapy
http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/GT1_Viekira.pdf

Genotype 1: Sovaldi (Sofosbuvir) Triple Therapy
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Sovaldi_GT1.pdf

Genotypes 2 & 3: Sovaldi (Sofosbuvir) Plus Ribavirin
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Sovaldi_GT2-3.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