



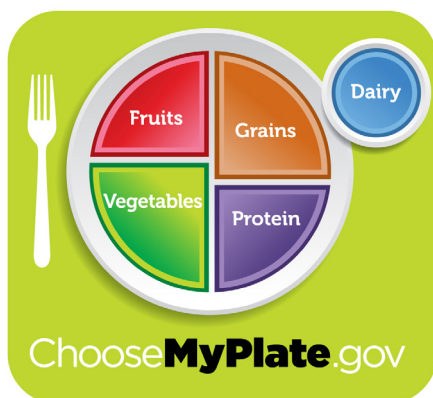
HCSP FACT SHEET

Nutrition and Hepatitis C

Written by: Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

FORWARD

Nutrition is an important component of living well with hepatitis C. It is also important to help with the prevention of steatosis (fatty infiltrates of the liver) that contributes to HCV-related liver disease progression. A poor diet and little or no exercise can significantly contribute to the formation of steatosis. Therefore, it is recommended that people with hepatitis C eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, drink plenty of clear fluids, engage in moderate exercise and get plenty of rest. These are all useful strategies to improve overall health and help people living with hepatitis C. It is highly recommended that people with hepatitis C should consult their healthcare provider – and perhaps also a trained dietitian or nutritionist – before starting any new diet.



Diet

A diet that follows the general guidelines for good nutrition based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (www.choosemyplate.gov) is recommended for people with chronic hepatitis C. Balancing the food you eat with physical activity is also recommended.

A healthy diet is low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium (salt), high in complex carbohydrates, and has adequate protein. Most people can obtain adequate nutrients by eating a well-balanced diet.

—CONTINUED

HCSP FACT SHEET

*A publication of the
Hepatitis C Support Project*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
HCSP PUBLICATIONS**

Alan Franciscus

DESIGN

*Leslie Hoex,
Blue Kangaroo Design*

PRODUCTION

Leslie Hoex

CONTACT INFORMATION

Hepatitis C Support Project
PO Box 15144
Sacramento, CA 95813
alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org

The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

This information is provided by the Hepatitis C Support Project a nonprofit organization for HCV education, support and advocacy

Reprint permission is granted and encouraged with credit to the Hepatitis C Support Project.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations include many factors such as age, sex, and physical activity. Also, there are very practical tips and suggestions on how to eat healthily, a system to keep track of what you eat and various resources and links. To learn more information about nutrition and the food guide, visit www.choosemyplate.gov

Tips for Eating Healthy

The following is speculative, but is nutritionally sound: Processed foods may contain chemical additives and high levels of sodium (salt), so people with hepatitis C may benefit from limiting consumption of canned, frozen, or preserved foods, as well as fast foods.

It is often recommended that people with HCV should avoid foods high in fat, salt, or sugar. Some people with hepatitis C find it difficult to tolerate dairy products; if this is the case, soy, almond, cashew, coconut, hemp, or rice milk may be suitable substitutes. Some experts believe protein from vegetables, dairy products, fish, or chicken may be easier to process than protein from meat. However, adequate protein is necessary for body tissue maintenance and repair. Moderation is the key to living well with hepatitis C.

People with hepatitis C who have cirrhosis should see a liver specialist and consult with a nutritionist for special dietary needs.

Food Safety

All meat, fruits, and vegetables should be washed thoroughly to remove possible harmful residues and chemicals. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling food. Be sure to wash surfaces, utensils, and any other items while preparing food to avoid cross contamination of food items.

Shellfish

People with hepatitis C should avoid eating raw or undercooked shellfish which can contain hepatitis A and bacterial infections that could lead to serious health consequences and even death.

HCV Symptoms and Side Effects

Some people with hepatitis C experience many symptoms such as loss of appetite (anorexia), nausea, and diarrhea. These may also occur as side effects of the drugs used to treat HCV. Many people find it helpful to eat small, frequent healthy meals and snacks rather than three large meals each day. Soft or liquid foods and foods at room temperature (neither hot nor cold) may be easier to tolerate while spicy or fatty foods may worsen nausea. If a person is unable to obtain enough nutrients by eating normally, liquid nutritional supplements (such as Advera, Ensure, or Sustacal) can be used.

Trans Fats

Avoid foods that contain trans fats (partially hydrogenated vegetable oils)—the artificial kind—since consuming trans fats are known to cause some serious health problems including

—CONTINUED

Nutrition and Hepatitis C –CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

increasing “bad” cholesterol levels and lowering ‘good’ cholesterol levels and contributing to heart disease.

In 2013, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended a ban on all trans-fats. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has set a deadline of 2018 to eliminate the artificial trans fats from all products. Of note, trans fats do not add any nutritional value.

In 2007, New York City adopted a regulation that eliminated almost all trans fats from restaurant menus. Most New Yorkers didn’t even notice the difference. Major fast-food chains adopted the changes and did not receive very many complaints. California banned trans fats in restaurants in 2010 and all bakery products in 2011.

Trans fats can have serious health consequences. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2016 reported that eliminating artificial trans fats from the United States food supply may prevent between 72,000 (6%) to 228,000 (19%) cases of chronic heart disease, sudden death from heart disease and diabetes.

Food Labels

It is critical to read and understand food labels. It is important to know what a serving size means—some labeling can be deceptive. For example, a product label may state that the package is one serving with a low-calorie count. The package would list that it has 3 servings. The reality is,

however, that the entire package is really 1 normal serving.

Another deceptive practice is the list of ingredients on the food package. The ingredients are listed by amount of the ingredient in the product. The manufacturer wants the healthier ingredient listed first. Sugar has 61 types and different names. A consumer who reads a label and sees ‘sugar’ listed once may think there is only a small amount of sugar. However, a closer look may reveal dextrose, corn syrup, and fruit juice, for example, and realize that combining all the sugars would make the combined sugars the number one ingredient.

It can be challenging to read and understand the ingredient lists and food labels. The FDA has an excellent overview of the labeling at <https://www.fda.gov/food/ingredientpackaginglabeling/default.htm>

Fluids

Drinking enough clear fluids is an important part of a healthy diet. Water is often called the ‘silent nutrient’ because it provides needed minerals and essential fluids to keep us healthy. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends that the general daily fluid intake should be 91 ounces for women and 125 ounces for men. Fluid intake can come from food, water, and other drinks. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that you drink when thirsty.

–CONTINUED

Brief History –CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Vitamins

Fat-soluble vitamins are stored in the liver. Certain vitamins and minerals (e.g., vitamin A, vitamin D, iron, and niacin) can be harmful to the liver if consumed in high doses. Most vitamins and minerals can be obtained from a healthy well-balanced diet.

Some people with hepatitis C have low levels of fat-soluble vitamins and should have their levels checked by their medical providers.

You may not have a lot of control over what hepatitis C does to your body, but you can keep yourself healthier by eating a healthy diet. This will strengthen the immune system to help fight hepatitis C.

**GET TESTED
GET TREATED
GET CURED**

Related publications:

HCV Disease Progression

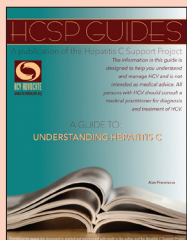
http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Disprograss_over.pdf

An Overview of HCV Diagnostic Tests

http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/diagnostic.pdf

For more information

- **Americans with Disabilities Act**
www.ada.gov
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov
- **Mayo Clinic**
www.mayoclinic.org
- **ChooseMyPlate.gov**
www.choosemyplate.gov
- **MedlinePlus**
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus



A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING HCV

We have updated our most popular publication. Please feel free to download, read, print and distribute.

DOWNLOAD

http://hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/HCV_Guide.pdf

HCV Education and Support