



HCSP FACT SHEET

• HCV TREATMENT – SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT •

Maintaining a Positive Attitude

Written by: Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

Foreword

The side effects that people experience on therapy range from mild to moderate. In addition to the physical side effects, one may experience some psychological problems that can be triggered by HCV therapy, especially with riabivirin. In order to get through therapy, sometimes it is simply a matter of equipping yourself with the necessary tools and strategies.

Maintaining a positive attitude while on treatment may be difficult, but it is essential and should be at the top of your list for side effect management. Although there is no scientific data at this time to support the notion that a positive attitude will have an impact on hepatitis C or treatment outcome, many patients report that attitude was one of the most important factors for staying on therapy. Strive to maintain a positive attitude, but it would be unrealistic to assume that you will achieve perfection 100% of the time. The point is that a positive attitude is a process and not the goal. Be realistic and don't set yourself up for failure. Part of maintaining a positive attitude is to take care of yourself mentally, emotionally and physically.

Attitude

How do you maintain a positive attitude? There are many steps you can take. For example, before beginning therapy write a list of the reasons why you are being treated and read the list often.

Reasons to undergo therapy are:

- To improve liver and overall health
- Live longer and better
- To feel that you have done all that you can do
- To be alive for your children, grandchildren and loved ones
- To experience life and all it has to offer
- To simply get rid of the virus

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
C.D. Mazoff, PhD

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.

Maintaining a Positive Attitude

- To put the treatment or hepatitis C behind you
- To have children
- To reduce symptoms and increase quality of life
- To help reach personal and professional goals
- To avoid being a burden to others

Starting the day off with a positive attitude is half the battle. When you wake up in the morning try to think of one thing you are grateful for in your life.

Examples:

- I feel grateful that I have the opportunity to take this treatment
- I am grateful for the people in my life
- I am grateful I have a roof over my head or a bed to sleep in at night

Try restructuring your thought processes. *For example:*

- Instead of saying “I’m overwhelmed,” say and believe “I am doing the best that I can”
- If you find yourself thinking “I’m tired,” try saying to yourself “This will eventually pass”
- When you say “I can’t do this,” try saying “I can do this because it is only temporary”

In the evening when you are going to sleep, look back at your day and define what made you feel better and what made you feel worse. Congratulate yourself for getting through the day! Remind yourself that you are one more day closer to completing treatment and your goal.

Support

Staying positive while on therapy would be almost impossible if a person did not have a very good support system established and in place well before starting therapy. Support from as many areas as possible is critical. Support comes in many forms, including family, friends, co-workers, and from peers found in

support groups. If you do not already attend a support group, consider joining one before starting therapy.

Personal Appearance

Keeping a positive attitude requires that you take really good care of your body, including your appearance. When you look good you generally feel better. If you wake up in the morning and feel achy and out of sorts generally, it will help you feel better if you take the necessary steps to stay well-groomed. Starting your day off feeling fresh will create a positive influence on your emotions for the entire day.

Try these strategies:

- Shower or bathe daily. Spoil yourself with bathing products that smell and feel good. Light a candle and listen to soothing music
- Take care of the hands, feet and nails
- Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize!
- Consider getting a different hair style that would be attractive and easy to take care of
- Brush and floss your teeth regularly
- Men – shower and shave or trim facial hair
- Women – if you regularly use make-up, then continue while on treatment
- Get dressed even if you will be laying on the couch (wear comfortable clothing)
- Wear colors that make you feel good

Exercise

Exercise is one of the most important components of health maintenance, even on therapy. It will help you stay positive, focused and improve your general well-being. Moderation is the key to physical activity and always check in with your medical provider about what form of exercise would be best while on HCV treatment. Don’t forget to stretch before and after any physical activity.

Maintaining a Positive Attitude

Examples:

- Stretching
- Walking
- Hula-hooping
- Swimming
- Yoga
- Pilates
- Weight-bearing exercise
- Dancing

Relaxation

Being on HCV medication is stressful. Trying to remember to take all of the medications, dealing with side effects, a job and family can greatly overwhelm most people. It is important that people build in relaxation strategies. Try some of these to help you with relaxing:

- Meditation – try saying “may I be well” while you take a deep breath, say “may others be well” when you exhale
- Prayer – practice your spiritual preference at least once a day
- Light a candle and listen to music
- Many people hold their breath when they are stressed out. During these periods try gently breathing in and out

- Sit or walk in a place of natural beauty, such as a beach, garden, or park

Social Events

Treatment-related side effects and the everyday demands of life can create some uncertainty. Maintain a social life but be realistic when scheduling dates or appointments. The surest way to become depressed is to isolate yourself from family and friends. However, it is important to talk with family and friends before starting treatment so that they can be supportive if you need to cancel or adjust any plans. Sometimes just the knowledge that you can cancel or leave a social activity early will help to reduce the stress. Relax and enjoy the time spent with family and friends.

Daily strategies

Engage in activities that make you laugh. Choose movies that are comedies rather than movies with painful themes. Read the comics, watch sitcoms, use humor – use it during the difficult moments to get a better perspective. Indulge in a favorite hobby, but, most of all, learn to pamper yourself.

Related publications:

- **A Guide to Hepatitis C: Treatment Side Effect Management**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Treatment_Side_Effect_Guide.pdf
- **Managing Side Effects of HCV Treatment**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/SEM_SideEffects.pdf

For more information

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans with Disabilities Act
 www.ada.gov • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 www.cdc.gov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayo Clinic
 www.mayoclinic.com • MedlinePlus
 www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus |
|---|--|