



HCSP FACT SHEET

• HCV TREATMENT – SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT •

Anxiety, Mania, and Depression

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Foreword

Patients report an array of side effects while undergoing treatment for chronic hepatitis C virus infection (HCV). Depression and anxiety are commonly reported problems. The symptoms of HCV treatment-induced depression are similar to those seen in regular depression, such as feeling “down,” apathetic, and lacking energy. However, some patients experience a variety of other symptoms, many of which they would not associate with depression. This may be important to know especially if you have a history of depression. If what you are experiencing now does not feel like depression, you may be less likely to report it. For instance, a patient who previously felt withdrawn when depressed might experience feelings of anger and irritability during treatment. The purpose of this fact sheet is to describe some of the neuropsychiatric side effects of HCV medications so you can discuss these with your healthcare provider. These side effects respond to medical treatment and support, especially with early intervention.

Important Note: If you have thoughts of suicide or hurting yourself or others, seek immediate professional help.

Neuropsychiatric Side Effects

The prescribing information that accompanies HCV treatment medications lists depression, psychosis, and suicide among the potential side effects. Also reported are agitation, mood alteration, aggressive behavior, difficulty concentrating, mania, and bipolar disorder. In clinical trials, a third of patients reported irritability, anxiety, and nervousness. In one study, 20% of patients developed manic/hypomanic side effects with an additional 23% showing depression with manic features (see *Mania and Hypomania*). Insomnia occurred in 30% of patients and fatigue was 65%. Insomnia and fatigue are symptoms of depression and can also cause or worsen anxiety and depression. Nervousness, insomnia, and fatigue can also be symptoms of other underlying disorders, such as thyroid abnormalities, substance abuse or medication problems.

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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.

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Anxiety, Mania and Depression

Anxiety and Depression

Most people think that anxiety and depression are opposite sides of the coin, but in fact, they aren't. Anxiety accompanies depression in close to half of all depressed patients. Some-times referred to as agitated depression, patients may have feelings of irritability, anger, restlessness, or being "on edge." Some patients may report an increase in worrying or have obsessive thoughts.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder, formerly known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes mood swings. We all have mood fluctuations. However, the symptoms of bipolar disorder are much more intense and can be extremely severe. The "down" portion of bipolar is depression and the "up" part is called mania (see *Mania and Hypomania*). Occasionally a patient will have symptoms of depression, but not have any obvious symptoms of mania. The symptoms of mania may become apparent after starting medication for the treatment of depression. If your doctor prescribes antidepressant medication for you and you notice symptoms of mania, report this immediately. Bipolar disorder is treatable.

Mania and Hypomania

Mania is a mood disorder characterized by an extremely hyperactive state that lasts for a week or more. Hypomania is a milder form of mania, characterized by an elevated or irritable mood that persists for at least 4 days.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, some symptoms of mania are:

- Increased energy, activity, and restlessness
- Excessively "high," overly good, euphoric mood
- Extreme irritability
- Racing thoughts and talking very fast, jumping from one idea to another
- Distractibility, can't concentrate well

- Little sleep needed
- Unrealistic beliefs in one's abilities and powers
- Poor judgment
- Spending sprees
- A lasting period of behavior that is different from usual
- Increased sexual drive
- Abuse of drugs, particularly cocaine, alcohol, and sleeping medications
- Provocative, intrusive, or aggressive behavior
- Denial that anything is wrong

Help for Depression

If you notice any fatigue or mood changes, such as irritability, lack of pleasure, or any signs of depression, talk to your doctor. Antidepressant medications are commonly prescribed to treat depression. These medications can dramatically improve the quality of life during treatment. Since it can take 2 to 8 weeks for antidepressant medications to take effect, do not expect immediate results. Some people may notice improvement in a week or two, but typically, antidepressant medications must be taken regularly for six to eight weeks before their full effect is felt.

When it becomes time to stop taking antidepressant medications, patients need to taper off slowly under medical supervision. Some patients wait a month or more after they have completed HCV treatment before they feel they are ready to stop taking antidepressants. Symptoms of anxiety and depression may occur for a few weeks or months after you stop taking antidepressants. Never stop a medication without talking to your doctor.

The symptoms of medication-induced depression and anxiety will gradually fade away after your HCV treatment has ended. It may take time before you feel life has "returned to normal." Patience and support will serve you well.

Anxiety, Mania and Depression

Disclaimer: The diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric and other medical disorders requires a trained medical professional. Information contained in this article is intended for educational purposes only. It should NOT be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment of any mental/psychiatric disorders. Please consult a medical professional if the information here leads you to believe you or someone you know may have a psychiatric or other medical illness.

Note: Those taking HCV or HIV protease inhibitors should avoid St. John’s wort.

Related publications:

- **HCV and Mental Health: HCV and Depression**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/MH_HCV_and_Depression.pdf
- **HCV and Mental Health: Managing Depression**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/MH_Managing_Depression.pdf
- **HCV and Mental Health: Medical Treatment for Depression**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/MH_MedTreat_Depression.pdf

For more information

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Mental Health
 www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/ • Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
 www.dbsalliance.org | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
 www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml • Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 www.samhsa.gov |
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Visit our websites to learn more about viral hepatitis:

**www.hcvadvocate.org • www.hbvadvocate.org
www.hepatitistattoos.org**

