



a series of fact sheets written by experts in the field of liver disease

# HCSP FACT SHEET

## •HCV TREATMENT – SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT•

# Water

Written by: Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

### Foreword

It is very important to drink adequate amounts of water during HCV therapy. In fact, many of the side effects from HCV therapy can be helped by simply drinking an adequate amount of fluids. Can you drink too much water? YES! Drinking excessive amounts of water can affect the body's electrolyte balance, which could potentially lead to serious health problems and even death. For this reason it is best to check in with your medical provider about the amount of water you should drink while on and off of therapy.

There are many strategies that can help you achieve a goal of drinking the right amount of water every day to stay healthy. Try some of these simple tips:

- Set your watch alarm to beep every hour – sip a glass of water between each hour
- Keep chilled water within reach
- Eat foods that contain high levels of water – such as watermelon
- Drink water before you become thirsty – being thirsty is a sign that you may be dehydrated.
- Try to limit drinking too many caffeinated beverages such as sodas, tea and coffee. Healthy beverages equals a healthy diet.
- Keep water in places that you frequent – at home, in the office and in the car.
- A slice of lemon, lime or cucumber will add some flavor to the water.
- Sipping water throughout the day instead of gulping it will give your body more of a chance to absorb it.

### How Much Water?

Drink plenty of water and other healthy liquids. Limit caffeine to 200 to 300 mgs a day (2 to 4 cups of coffee). Limit sugar to 6.5 teaspoons for women and 9.5 teaspoons for men.

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**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.

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## Water

In the past, the general rule was to drink 8-8oz glasses (1.8 liters) of water a day. However, there have been subsequent studies that don't back up this view. Now, the general rule is to make sure you are well-hydrated. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends that the general fluid intake should be 91 ounces (~2.6 kilograms) for women and 125 ounces (~3.6 kilograms) for men. But remember that fluid intake can come from food and other drinks. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that you drink when thirsty and follow some of the tips below.

### **Try some of these simple tips to keep track of the amount of water you drink:**

- Fill up a water bottle with fresh water. Write down the amount of water that is held in the bottle and how many times it is refilled throughout the day.
- Buy commercial water bottles that list the fluid content. Fill up or buy enough bottles to meet the daily requirement. Set the bottles in plain view to help remember to drink all of the bottles.

### **Urine Check**

A good way to check if you are drinking enough water is to check your urine. If it is a light color and has relatively little smell it means that you are drinking enough water. If the urine is totally clear it may mean that you are drinking too much water. If the urine is a darker color and smells—this indicates that more clear fluids should be consumed. HCV treatment and medications can affect the color and smell of your urine – check with your medical provider if you are concerned.

**Note:** The media has been focused on the use of plastic bottles and the general issue of bottled water. If you filled one third of the plastic bottle with oil, this would be equivalent to how much energy is needed to make the bottle, package the liquid and ship it to retail outlets. This does not even take into account the

problem of disposal. From a practical standpoint, we want to encourage people to drink water, but perhaps a good approach is to re-fill and reuse the bottle and always recycle it to prevent the unnecessary waste and pollution of our valuable resources. But remember to stay away from plastic containers that contain BPA and wash and disinfect plastic bottles between each use.

### **Be Warned:**

As mentioned above you can drink too much water, but there may be circumstances that will require adjustments when considering the amount of clear fluids to consume:

- End-stage liver disease, impaired kidney function, and liver transplantation: check with a medical provider about how much fluid to consume
- During hot weather, drink more fluids
- Watch intake of any beverages that contain sugar that could cause tooth problems and health problems
- Confine the use of water bottles to one-time use especially water bottles made with number one plastics – the chemicals can seep into water and if not properly cleaned between use could harbor bacteria. Use approved plastic containers that are BPA free or better yet use glass containers
- Never leave plastic water bottles in direct sunlight or in a car
- Be careful about drinking too many fluids too close to bedtime since frequent urination can disrupt sleep

The positive impact of drinking water on side effect management is quite substantial.

### **Side Effect Management**

Many people on HCV therapy report that on days when they drink plenty of water there is a marked decrease in the side effects compared to days when they drink little or no water.

**Water*****The benefits of drinking water for side effect management include:***

- Water flushes out wastes, transports nutrients, and regulates body temperature.
- Water will help keep skin hydrated during therapy, which will help reduce the dry skin syndrome caused by HCV medications, especially ribavirin.
- Many people on HCV therapy experience the ribavirin cough – water can help lubricate the throat, which results in less coughing.
- Adequate water consumption aids the digestive system, helping

to avoid constipation and other digestive problems.

- Drinking water will help replace fluids lost during a bout of diarrhea.
- Some HCV medications reduce natural saliva production, which can increase the risk of dental cavities and diseases. Water will help keep your gums hydrated and will rinse away harmful bacteria in the mouth.

Drinking adequate amounts of water is one of the best strategies people can use while on therapy to lessen some of the side effects of therapy and to stay healthy.

***Related publications:***

- **A Guide to Hepatitis C: Treatment Side Effect Management**  
[www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets\\_pdf/Treatment\\_Side\\_Effect\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Treatment_Side_Effect_Guide.pdf)
- **Side Effect Management: Hemolytic Anemia**  
[www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets\\_pdf/SEM\\_anemia.pdf](http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/SEM_anemia.pdf)

***For more information***

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Americans with Disabilities Act</b><br/><a href="http://www.ada.gov">www.ada.gov</a></li><li>• <b>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</b><br/><a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mayo Clinic</b><br/><a href="http://www.mayoclinic.com">www.mayoclinic.com</a></li><li>• <b>MedlinePlus</b><br/><a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus">www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus</a></li></ul> |
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**HCV Treatment – Side Effect Management**