



HCSP FACT SHEET

HCV ADVOCATE

• EXTRAHEPATIC MANIFESTATION OF HCV •

Vitiligo

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Foreword

Vitiligo is a specific type of dermatological condition characterized by loss of pigment of the skin that can affect almost any part of the body, including premature graying of hair. The exact cause of vitiligo is unknown but it is believed to be an autoimmune disease that can be caused by genetic and/or environmental factors. The relationship between HCV and vitiligo is controversial. Most studies have not been able to find a direct link between HCV and vitiligo, but some smaller studies have suggested a causal link. Still other studies have found a link between vitiligo and interferon therapy.

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Symptoms

The most common symptoms include white patches of skin that itch. It can affect any area of the body but it is usually seen on the extremities, face or neck, and skin folds. It can also affect the areas around the lips, genitals, gums, and the colored skin that surrounds the nipple. Vitiligo generally strikes people between the ages of 10-30 years old, and it is common in females and males alike.

Causes

The exact cause of vitiligo is not known. It is an autoimmune disease that is believed to be hereditary. The proposed theories are that stress, thyroid dysfunction, skin injury, severe sunburns, chemicals, and medicines combined with the genetic tendency towards vitiligo can all contribute to the condition. However, these are theories that have not yet been substantiated.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of vitiligo is usually based on a combination of tests: physical examination, blood tests for autoimmune markers, skin biopsy, and obtaining a medical history of the individual's family.

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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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HCV – Vitiligo

Treatment

There is no standardized treatment for vitiligo. Treatment is usually individualized and can include phototherapy (light therapy), steroids, and various topical ointments. In severe cases of vitiligo skin grafts have been found to help as well as tattooing the skin in people with dark skin. The skin can also be dyed or artificially tanned although it is difficult to match the dyed or tanned area to the pigmentation of the surrounding or healthy skin.

Other strategies to help manage vitiligo include wearing sunscreen and sun-protecting clothing, and

avoiding the use of hair dyes and bleaches that can damage the skin.

Dealing with Vitiligo

In people with moderate to severe vitiligo the emotional toll can be enormous especially if it affects the skin on specific parts of the body that are visible, such as the face, arms hands, and legs. Finding a medical provider who is well-versed in treating the physical and emotional issues of vitiligo is important. Peer support in the form of a support group for discussing the condition and receiving emotional support is critical.

Related publications:

- **An Overview of Extrahepatic Manifestations**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Extrahepatic.pdf
- **Vasculitis**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/vasculitis.pdf
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