

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

*Being an Effective
Healthcare Consumer:
Getting Organized
for the Health of It*

Lucinda Porter, RN

How to Organize

Start by asking for copies of your medical records. Although you have a right to copies, it is a common legitimate practice to charge a fee for this. From now on, make it part of your routine to ask for copies of every important piece of your medical records, especially test results. You do not need a copy of everything. The most recent copies are usually sufficient. Important medical documents to have are:

- Hepatitis C viral load (HCV RNA)
- Genotype
- Results from liver function tests, especially ALT and AST values
- Most recent complete blood count (CBC)
- Liver biopsy pathology report
- Ultrasound and imaging reports
- Hepatitis A and B immunization records or lab results or dates for those who have a history of either of these
- All recent lab results that screen for other diseases or conditions

Here is a list of medical information that everyone should maintain, young, old, healthy or living with a chronic disease:

- Allergy list – Include medications, foods, insects, latex, chemicals, etc.
- Your medical history from your perspective (see HCSP's Fact Sheet *Being an Effective Consumer: Your Medical History*)
- Medication log
- A list of major diseases in your family
- Notes with dates and purposes of major surgeries or other procedures

- Ongoing journal of major medical events from this day forward
- A list of current health concerns and questions
- Immunization records
- Contact information of all your medical providers
- Emergency contact information
- Health screening reminders and results
- Health insurance information
- Medical card or medical identification number
- Advance Directives (legal documents stating your wishes for end-of-life care and your designation of someone to advocate for these wishes)

Store everything in one place. Use whatever system you prefer – a notebook, file cabinet, computer or a box. The important goal is to make it a habit to keep all your records in one place. If you store information on your computer, make sure you keep a back-up copy.

Keep all your appointment information in one calendar or date book. You can also use this to record when you start or stop medications and other medical-related events.

Make it a habit to update your home medical records after each medical visit or event. Do an annual review. Pick a memorable date for this review, such as your birthday, New Year's Day, or the day after you file your income taxes.

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

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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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