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How to use this guide

We know the diagnosis of hepatitis C can be overwhelming. This guide is to help alleviate concerns, while giving you important information to share with family or friends.

Your health care provider has suggested that you start treatment. This means that your health care provider believes you have a good chance of responding to medicine. We’re here to help, every step of the way. Remember that taking your medicine as prescribed will help you lead a healthy life. Please do not stop taking your medicine without checking with your health care provider.

Health care providers have learned how to individualize treatment so that each patient has the best chance of responding. The treatment you receive may differ from the treatment of other patients with hepatitis C. This is one of the reasons it is so important that you talk about any questions or concerns you may have with your health care provider or with a Prime Therapeutics Specialty Pharmacy™ (Prime Specialty Pharmacy) nurse or pharmacist.

Personal support can help make a challenging journey easier

24/7 ACCESS
Visit us online
MyPrime.com/Specialty
A pharmacist is always available to answer questions
877.627.6337 (TTY 711)
There are four parts to this guide

1. **Understanding your hepatitis C**
   We’re here to help you become a better informed member. Together, in this chapter, we’ll discuss how to live your best life with a hepatitis C diagnosis.

2. **Taking care of your body**
   Find ways to take charge of your health — both physically and mentally — with proactive changes.

3. **Hepatitis C treatment approaches**
   Want to learn more about treatment approaches that your health care provider or Prime Specialty Pharmacy team might suggest? We’ll go over treatment approaches, including medicine and other approaches to help manage hepatitis C in a way that works best for your lifestyle.

4. **Understanding side effects**
   Learn when to call your health care provider and what tips can help alleviate medicine side effects.
According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), over 3.5 million people in the United States are living with hepatitis C. Whether you’re newly diagnosed, or you’ve been aware you carry the virus, this guide is all about empowering you to understand hepatitis C and what can be done to help you stay healthy.
What is hepatitis C?²

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that attacks the liver. The word “hepatitis” means inflammation and swelling of the liver. Hepatitis C can begin as a short-term illness that is usually passed from another individual around six months after exposure. It can be transferred at any point. While not everyone has symptoms, hepatitis C can cause liver disease. In most cases, hepatitis C remains in the body and becomes a long-term or chronic infection. This occurs in about 75 – 80% of those infected, according to the CDC. There currently isn’t a vaccine for hepatitis C. But with lifestyle changes and a proactive approach to your health, hepatitis C is curable (success is measured as an undetectable level of virus in the blood 12 weeks after the end of therapy).

You’re not alone

Many people with hepatitis C do not have any symptoms. One of the most important reasons you should stay up to date with treatments is that hepatitis C can damage your liver.
What is a virus?³

A virus is a very small organism that can invade healthy cells and alter the way they work.

1 Viruses can harm healthy cells.
2 When a virus enters healthy cells, it replicates, or makes copies of itself. Hepatitis C replicates very rapidly.
3 It can make up to one trillion copies of itself each day in an infected individual.
Acute versus chronic hepatitis C

Acute hepatitis C

According to the CDC, in the United States alone, 30,500 people were diagnosed in 2014 with the acute hepatitis C virus—a short-term viral infection. Often showing no symptoms, the acute form of hepatitis C is contagious and stays only briefly in the body. If untreated, it can lead to bigger health issues down the road. Sometimes, the disease improves without treatment. However, in 75 – 85% of cases, it can lead to a chronic condition, according to the CDC. The chronic form may cause long-term problems in the liver, including liver damage and liver cancer. People that are diagnosed with acute hepatitis C are infectious for a small period of time, often just several months. Most people infected with the acute form of hepatitis C will experience symptoms like fatigue and vomiting within the first six months after exposure.

Chronic hepatitis C

When acute hepatitis C progresses, or is left untreated, a condition may occur called chronic hepatitis C. Chronic hepatitis C can be a very serious condition affecting the liver including cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) or liver cancer.
Protect yourself and those you care about

Hepatitis C is spread through blood or body fluids. You can prevent the spread of hepatitis C with a few easy steps.

It’s important to remember these things to help prevent spreading hepatitis C:

→ When you are sexually active, use latex condoms.
→ Wash your hands frequently with soap and water after coming into contact with your own blood or bodily fluids.
→ Use a plastic bag when discarding personal items such as tissues, feminine hygiene products and bandages.
→ Do not share personal care items such as nail clippers, razors, toothbrushes, combs or needles.
→ Keep open wounds, sores and rashes covered to protect your body from additional bacteria and to protect others.
→ Do not donate blood, plasma, eggs or sperm.

Hepatitis C CAN be spread through

→ Sharing contaminated needles for recreational drug purposes, tattoo or piercing needles
→ Not utilizing barrier methods of protection (condoms) during sexual intercourse
→ Blood transfusions or medical procedures. (Please note, this is uncommon due to screening of blood products since 1992)
→ Mothers to their baby during birth

Hepatitis C is NOT spread through

→ Holding hands
→ Hugging or kissing
→ Coughing or sneezing
→ Sharing utensils like silverware and glasses

Note: Injury or illness may cause some of these substances to be contaminated with blood, making transmission possible.
Taking care of your body

Fortunately, there are ways you can reduce your physical and mental health stress by being proactive in a few areas. This includes lifestyle habits to cope with the symptoms of hepatitis C, and maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, a smart sleep schedule and a great emotional support network.
Eating healthy

There is no diet that is universally best for people with hepatitis C. Eating a healthy diet gives your body the fuel it needs to perform at its best. Invest the time to learn how to improve your diet.

Good nutrition can help:

→ Improve immune function
→ Reduce inflammation
→ Increase muscle strength
→ Increase energy
→ Stabilize mood
→ Manage fatigue

A balanced diet includes plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. It also limits salt, sugar, saturated fat and alcohol. It may include taking daily vitamins and minerals. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish, may be helpful in reducing inflammation.

ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Ask your health care provider if there are vitamins or minerals that could help to manage your symptoms and keep you healthy. Also, try to avoid any foods that seem to increase symptoms.
Maintaining a healthy weight

A healthy weight is one that allows your body to function at its best. To find out if your weight is at a healthy level, you should know your body mass index (BMI) — www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose-wt/BMI/bicalc.htm. Some people with hepatitis C have difficulty maintaining their weight due to side effects from their medicine. These side effects may make it harder to keep a healthy appetite. Other people with hepatitis C may struggle to keep a healthy weight because some medicines allow the body to absorb more fat, which also hinders the ability to maintain a healthy weight.

Sleeping well

Your body needs rest to heal and recharge, especially during treatment for hepatitis C. One of the best things you can do for your body is to make sure you are getting eight or more hours of sleep each night. If your body is telling you that you’re tired and you are having trouble falling asleep, make sure to mention it to your health care provider.

Exercising regularly

Some prescribed hepatitis C medicines can cause you to feel tired. As strange as it may seem, exercising may actually boost your energy level. Try to exercise regularly. It can also help you cope with stress and manage your weight.
Supporting your emotional health

Maintaining your emotional health can help to support your physical health. Some people become overwhelmed with their diagnosis and the life adjustments they need to make. This is normal. Managing your stress and seeking help from friends, family or professionals are important aspects of staying healthy. Many people also benefit from joining in-person or online support groups.

Stress

Whether you’re newly diagnosed or you’ve been living with hepatitis C for some time, at certain points of your treatment you may experience stress. Stress may make the challenges of life difficult to handle — especially when it comes to your body. Here are three ways you can manage stress:

- **Write it down:** Record your thoughts in a journal and read through it often. Celebrate daily successes. You are more than this disease.

- **Take a break:** When you’re in the midst of a particularly difficult moment, step back and take a deep breath. Even taking a small nap or watching something you enjoy on TV may help brighten your mood.

- **Find a support group:** Every person needs a healthy balance of people who are able to help in stressful situations. Keep the phone numbers of family or friends you trust handy, and reach out to them as often as needed.
Depression

Depression is not a character flaw or weakness. It’s a health problem that starts from a chemical imbalance in the brain. If you have thoughts of suicide or of harming yourself or others, call 911 or go to the emergency room.

**A note on depression**

Everyone feels sad now and then. Sometimes a deep sadness or loss of interest in activities you usually enjoy can actually be a medical illness called depression. Depression can cause deeply sad feelings or high anxiety around every day activities. This may make it hard to live your life in the way you want.

If you think you may be depressed, talk with your health care provider. Your health care provider may prescribe an antidepressant medicine to help with your symptoms. Please note that it can take several weeks for you to feel the full benefit of antidepressants. Your health care provider may also recommend counseling for you. It may be helpful to speak to a mental health professional about the impact hepatitis C has had on your life.
Taking an active role in your health care includes paying careful attention to both symptoms and treatment. It also means talking openly with your health care provider. This part of your condition guide can help you:

- Note your disease symptoms and medicine's side effects
- Understand more about how your condition might affect your quality of life
- Understand more about how to get the most from your medicine therapy
- Write down questions or concerns to discuss with your health care provider
## Staying on track with your medicines

Here is what you can do to help get good results from your hepatitis C medicine therapy:

### DO

- Call your health care provider or pharmacist with any questions you may have concerning your hepatitis C medicines.
- Educate yourself about your hepatitis C medicines, especially the risks and warnings.
- Keep a list of the names and amounts of medicines you are taking.
- Stick to the medicine schedule your health care provider has prescribed.
- Add taking your medicines into your normal routine.
- Check with your health care provider before starting any new medicines, including vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies, prescription medicines and over-the-counter products.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially before and after an injection treatment. The best choices are water, clear fruit juices and other caffeine-free drinks.

### DON’T

- Skip or change the prescribed amount. By taking your medicine as prescribed, you will improve your chances for a positive treatment outcome.
- Drink alcohol.
A note on treatments

Hepatitis C has many more treatment options than in the recent past. More drugs will likely continue to enter the market in the future. Health care providers will be able to make informed decisions to choose the best treatment option for each person. In some instances, the older therapy regimens may still be considered the best, while newer drugs could be selected as the best option for other people. Your health care provider will choose which medicine is best for you.

Until recently, interferon plus ribavirin has been the standard treatment for hepatitis C. There are many types of interferon, but they all work in a similar way. Interferon may have some benefit when given alone, but adding ribavirin increases its effectiveness.

Newer medicines that have been approved for use include several oral medicines that may be given alone or in combination with other oral medicines. These options may cause fewer side effects than past therapies, may be taken less frequently (once a day in some cases), and for a shorter period of time. The newer drugs may lead to better outcomes and improve the chances for treatment success. Success is measured as an undetectable level of virus in the blood 12 weeks after the end of therapy.

ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Remember to talk with your health care provider about your lab test results. Make sure you understand what they mean and don’t be afraid to ask questions if you need further clarification.
### Hepatitis C medicines⁷⁻¹⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRUG NAME</th>
<th>AVAILABLE FORMS</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Harvoni (ledipasvir, sofosbuvir) | Oral tablet | • Fatigue  
• Headache  
• Insomnia  
• Nausea  
• Diarrhea |
| Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) | Oral tablet | • Fatigue  
• Headache  
• Insomnia  
• Nausea  
• Flu-like symptoms |
| Olysio (simeprevir) | Oral tablet | • Nausea  
• Skin rash  
• Muscle aches  
• Shortness of breath |
| Rebetol, Ribasphere, RibaTab (ribavirin) | Oral tablet | • Cough  
• Itchy skin  
• Hair loss  
• Anemia  
• Headache |
| Daklinza (daclatasvir) | Oral tablet | • Nausea  
• Headache  
• Diarrhea  
• Fatigue |
| Technivie (ombitasvir, paritaprevir, ritonavir) | Oral tablet | • Weakness  
• Fatigue  
• Nausea  
• Vomiting |
| Pegasys/Peg-Intron (pegylated interferons) | Injection | • Pain at injection site  
• Flu-like symptoms  
• Depression  
• Nausea  
• Hair loss  
• Vomiting  
• Diarrhea  
• Anemia  
• Neutropenia |
| Victrelis (boceprevir) | Oral tablet | • Nausea  
• Vomiting  
• Diarrhea  
• Anemia  
• Taste changes |
### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available Form</th>
<th>Possible Side Effects</th>
<th>IMPORTANT INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral tablet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not require combination therapy with other medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May be taken alone or in combination with other medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Must be used in combination with other medicines for hepatitis C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Must be used in combination to treat hepatitis C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Must be taken in combination with Sovaldi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Usually taken with ribavirin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taken in combination with other medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medicine is not started until the fifth week of therapy, following a four-week course of pegylated interferon and ribavirin. Always taken in combination with other medicines for hepatitis C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHECK YOUR PRESCRIPTION

Be sure to always check your prescription label for dosage information and directions of use to ensure you take your medicine exactly as your health care provider has prescribed it for you.
Some people do not experience any discomfort from their hepatitis C medicine. Others may struggle when dealing with side effects. You might find that taking your medicine at bedtime allows you to sleep through the strongest side effects of your hepatitis C medicine. Here are four of the most common side effects hepatitis C patients sometimes face. Remember, if any side effects have changed your overall quality of life, it’s time to talk to your health care provider.
Possible side effects

1. **If you’re having trouble sleeping**, consider avoiding large meals or caffeine too close to bedtime. You may also consider developing a peaceful bedtime routine that can help your body and mind better relax in the evening. Many people have found that relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation or deep breathing can help with alleviating sleep problems.

2. **If headaches are becoming more regular**, consider drinking more fluids—especially water. Some people have also found that dark rooms or warm baths can alleviate some headache symptoms. Make sure to talk to your health care provider or a pharmacist at Prime Specialty Pharmacy before using an over-the-counter pain reliever.

3. **If you are experiencing a fever**, make sure you are drinking plenty of fluids. Remember that a high fever or a fever lasting more than 48 hours needs to be addressed with your health care provider immediately.

4. **If you’re experiencing a dry mouth**, it’s recommended to start each day with a glass of water. Make sure to go for regular dental check-ups and let your dentist know about any medicines you are taking.

*A note on nausea and diarrhea*

Some medicines may cause digestive issues including nausea and diarrhea. When either occur, it’s important you keep your body hydrated and well-rested. For nausea, consider taking small bites of a cracker, or try eating foods at room temperature. For diarrhea, consider limiting foods that contain caffeine, and taking dairy out of your diet, as well as avoiding foods that cause cramping such as cabbage, beans, onions, green peppers and carbonated drinks.
A note about caring for your hair after treatment

Some of the older medicines used to treat hepatitis C, such as ribavirin and pegylated interferon may cause hair loss. After you finish your medicine, your hair will most likely grow back slowly. Consider wearing hats or scarves if you want a different look. When combing, use a wide-toothed comb to prevent hair breakage.
Pregnancy, breastfeeding and birth defects\textsuperscript{7,12,15,16}

Ribavirin
Many medicines for hepatitis C should not be used during pregnancy. Ribavirin may cause severe birth defects whether it is the female or male taking the medicine. Two effective forms of birth control must be used during the entire time that either partner is taking ribavirin, and for six months after the last dose. For example, the male uses a condom and the female uses a diaphragm or birth control pills. If a female is taking ribavirin, she must also have monthly pregnancy tests to confirm that she is not pregnant during this period. If the patient or a female partner of a male patient becomes pregnant, her health care provider should immediately be told. Additionally, women who are taking ribavirin must not breastfeed.

Interferon
Interferon therapy may harm a fetus. If a female of childbearing age is taking Pegasys or Peg-Intron, she must use effective contraception during treatment. It is very important that an effective birth control be used by both females and males being treated with Infergen (Interferon Alfacon-1). The effectiveness of hormonal birth control (birth control pills, some intrauterine devices [IUDs], vaginal rings, patches, injections and implants) may be reduced. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist for alternative non-hormonal contraception, including some IUDs and barrier methods (condoms, diaphragms) to avoid pregnancy. Since these medicines are taken with ribavirin and interferon, both partners must use two effective non-hormonal forms of birth control during the entire treatment, and for six months after the last dose. Additionally, women who are taking interferon must not breastfeed.

Other oral medicines
Other oral medicines that are not used with ribavirin or interferon therapy have not been studied in pregnant women. It is unknown whether fetal risks exist with these medicines if they are taken during pregnancy. Do not begin therapy for hepatitis C if you are pregnant or could become pregnant while taking an oral medicine. Additionally, women who are taking other oral medicines should talk with their health care provider about the safety of breastfeeding.

Transmission
The risk of transmitting the hepatitis C virus from the mother to the baby is relatively low. The risk of transmission depends on the amount of virus in the mother’s blood, and if the mother has any other risk factors such as being HIV positive. Currently, there is no evidence to support whether vaginal or Cesarean section is the preferred delivery method to reduce the transmission risk. Talk with your health care provider about breastfeeding plans.
When it’s time to call your health care provider

Chest pain

This includes discomfort in your chest, esophagus (throat) or lungs. This may feel like a burning or aching chest pain. Seek emergency treatment immediately if you develop chest pain while taking hepatitis C medicines, especially if the pain is:

- Very severe
- Different from pain you have had before
- Occurs when you are doing a strenuous activity, such as climbing stairs

Shortness of breath

If you feel short of breath, call your health care provider. Your health care provider will determine if it is related to your hepatitis C medicines or another medical problem that requires prompt attention.

Vision changes

Although it is uncommon, some people have sudden changes in vision while taking hepatitis C medicine. Call your health care provider right away if you develop:

- Blurry vision
- Double vision
- Light sensitivity
Also call your health care provider right away if you experience:

- Swelling in your legs, feet or ankles
- Severe diarrhea lasting for more than 48 hours
- Blood in your stool
- Skin rash or unusual skin reaction in the area of an injection
- Fever higher than 104°F at any time, or you have a fever lasting longer than 48 hours
- Extreme fatigue
- Allergic-type reactions such as trouble breathing, hives, etc.
- The injection site does not heal within a few days

ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

If you are experiencing a symptom or side effect that is worrying you, it is always best to call your health care provider. Your health care provider will determine if you need immediate attention and the next steps.
**Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Liver Foundation</strong>&lt;br&gt;liverfoundation.org&lt;br&gt;800.GO.LIVER (800.465.4837)</td>
<td>- The American Liver Foundation provides advocacy, education, support and research for the prevention, treatment and cure of liver disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</strong>&lt;br&gt;cdc.gov/hepatitis&lt;br&gt;800.CDC.INFO (800.232.4636)&lt;br&gt;TTY.888.232.6348</td>
<td>- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a federal government agency that is part of the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC provides information and research to help protect public health and safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hepatitis Foundation International</strong>&lt;br&gt;hepfi.org&lt;br&gt;800.891.0707</td>
<td>- Hepatitis Foundation International provides education regarding hepatitis and its treatment to help people make informed decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)</strong>&lt;br&gt;niddk.nih.gov&lt;br&gt;301.496.3583</td>
<td>- The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases is part of the National Institutes of Health. Its role is to conduct and support basic research on a number of diseases, including hepatitis C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Clinical Public Health Programs: Hepatitis C</strong>&lt;br&gt;hepatitis.va.gov</td>
<td>- The Department of Veterans Affairs Hepatitis C Program provides treatment and education to veterans with hepatitis C and their families. It also supports research on hepatitis C, as well as resources for health care providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF)</strong>&lt;br&gt;patientadvocate.org</td>
<td>- Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) is a national 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization which provides professional case management services to Americans with chronic, life-threatening and debilitating illnesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

1. (after adjustment for populations not sampled in the NHANES household surveys, such as incarcerated and homeless populations) <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2014surveillance/commentary.htm#bkgrndC>.


7. (paritaprevir/ritonavir/ombitasvir) prescribing information. AbbVie.


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Prime Therapeutics Specialty Pharmacy LLC (Prime Specialty Pharmacy) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Prime Therapeutics LLC (Prime). Prime Specialty Pharmacy works with your health plan to provide the specialty medicines you need. Prime Specialty Pharmacy wants to help you get the most from your medicine therapy by:

➔ Helping you get the medicines you need, when you need them
➔ Providing ongoing, personalized support from disease-specific experts
➔ Helping you manage the details so your condition does not manage you
This guide provides an overview of hepatitis C. It is not meant to replace medical advice from your doctor, pharmacist or other health care provider. Please contact them for more information. This guide is intended to be accurate. However, Prime Therapeutics and Prime Specialty Pharmacy are not responsible for loss or damage due to reliance on this guide.
ABOUT PRIME THERAPEUTICS SPECIALTY PHARMACY

We are trusted by your health plan to help you get the medicine you need to feel better and live well. Our pharmacy experts are working hard to make your medicine more affordable, and your experience easier.

We are fully accredited by URAC — Specialty Pharmacy Accreditation and ACHC (Accreditation Commission for Healthcare) — Specialty Pharmacy Accreditation.

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