How do I handle dating and sex, and when is the right time to say I have hep C?

March 1, 2016 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Relationships are complicated enough, but having hepatitis C virus (HCV) adds another level of complexity. Start by knowing the facts about HCV transmission. The risk of passing HCV sexually is low, especially heterosexually and between women. The risk increases in men who have sex with men. Properly used barrier protection reduces the risk of sexual transmission of HCV.

Once you are clear about how HCV is transmitted, you are ready to have the "conversation." Although sooner is better than later, you may need a few dates to see if the relationship is going anywhere. Plus, you need a certain amount of trust to lessen the chance that your hep C status will end up on social media.

As horrible as that sounds, if you delay your hep C disclosure, your potential partner may feel betrayed. If your date really likes you, and you give him or her time to digest the facts, then all you can do is hope for the best. It's especially hard if you are rejected because of this, since it is unfair. But encountering rejection is the nature of relationships, and if this is a deal breaker, better to find out sooner than later.

In the long run, the best strategy is to get treated for hep C. The newest HCV antivirals cure most people, typically in 12 weeks. With your hep C gone, you'll have one less thing to deal with in the world of relationships. Hep C or no hep C, there are plenty of other sexually-transmitted infections, so be sure to protect yourself.

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