



# Ten Things You Should Know About Hepatitis B and Do in 2017

January 23, 2017 By Christine Kukka

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It's 2017, and experts around the world continue to study the complex life cycle of the hepatitis B virus in order to find a chink in its armor that will lead to a cure. In 2016, there were successes and disappointments in the research and healthcare arena. Here is what you need to know about hepatitis B in 2017.

If you're taking tenofovir, ask your doctor about TAF if you're experiencing kidney problems or bone loss, especially if you're an older woman. If you're taking the antiviral tenofovir (Viread) long-term, ask your doctor about replacing it with TAF (Vemlidy). TAF is a reformulated version of tenofovir that delivers the antiviral more effectively to liver cells at a lower dose. Currently, doctors prescribe either tenofovir or entecavir for liver damage. Entecavir does not cause bone loss, but it doesn't work in people who have developed drug resistance to lamivudine or adefovir. For them, tenofovir is the only option, but it can cause bone loss and kidney problems when used long-term. With the U.S. Food and Drug's recent approval of TAF, consumers can now get tenofovir's robust antiviral activity at a lower dose. Because it's brand new, your provider may not know about it, so ask about it to see if it would be better for you.

Was medical or recreational marijuana just approved in your state? Exercise caution. Many in the hepatitis C community have used medically-prescribed marijuana to ease side effects from interferon for years, so many assume it's also safe for people with hepatitis B. Unfortunately, there are no studies that conclusively prove its safety. One [study](#) that monitored liver fibrosis in 700 people coinfecting with HIV and hepatitis C found, "...no evidence for an association between cannabis (marijuana) smoking and significant liver fibrosis progression in HIV/HCV coinfection."

But another [study](#) concluded: "Cell culture and animal model studies support that (marijuana) could have a therapeutic effect on liver injury and fibrosis progression. However, three cross-sectional studies in patients with chronic hepatitis C suggest that daily cannabis use is associated with fibrosis and steatosis."

There is also no information indicating if marijuana is safer when it's consumed in edibles vs. smoked, though many assume smoking introduces more toxins and chemical to the body. Bottom line: Just because your state approved it doesn't mean marijuana is safe for you. Talk to your doctor and watch for more studies.

[Click here](#) to read the other things you should know about hepatitis B and do in 2017

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