12 Tips For Liver Health

May 21, 2014 By Joseph Burke

We all do things in life that comes with consequences; unhealthy eating, smoking, drinking or living a toxic lifestyle of drug addiction/abuse. There are factors and things we can do to prolong our lives while we're in the pool of thousands awaiting their treatment regimens on the new medications coming out for Hepatitis C. I need to state for the record before we dive in, I come from a Christian home, and so drinking, smoking and drugs were not an enticement for me. The only time in my life I ever drank any sort of alcohol was at my own wedding during the main champagne toast. Though I lived a sheltered life, it helped me in the long run be healthier in my adult life.

1. **Get Educated -** I can't express enough how vitally important it is to get educated on your disease and what you can do in your own life to inhibit liver damage. Knowledge is power, and if you live your life with a sense of pride and that you think you know it all, you're heading down a road of disaster. If you or someone you know is living with Hepatitis C, it's crucial you understand your limits, boundaries and do your best to change elements of your lifestyle to help accommodate your disease and in the long run, prolonging your life. You need to know what the terms viral load, genotype and rapid responder mean. Dig in and start reading! **Start your education by clicking here**.
2. **Put The Drink Down** - It was once explained to me by a University of Kentucky Gastroenterologist Dr. Steven Shedlofsky that drinking alcohol with Hepatitis C is like pouring gasoline on open firery coals. The disease progresses much more rapidly and damage including fibrosis and scarring advance at higher rates than those who put down the bottle and prefer a sweet tea or iced water. **Here is a great article about alcohol consumption while living with Hepatitis C and/or HIV**.
3. **Every Breath You Take** - There was a time in my life when smoking sort of enticed me, but after trying my first cigarette and that horrid after taste in my mouth, I never caved to the addiction of smoking. Smoking rapidly increases chances of disease progression and eventually makes one a high risk for liver cancer [hepatocellular carcinoma]. Men with Hepatitis C who smoke have a more than 136-fold increased risk of liver cancer. **Read more about smoking and Hepatitis C**.
4. **You Are What You Eat** - Given today's increasing knowledge of harmful chemicals in processed foods like additives, GMO's and artificial sweetners can/will cause more harm to our bodies. Eating home cooked meals in balanced portions and straying from the fast food mecha can bring new vigor to your life. Everything you put in your mouth is processed, broken down and digested through your liver. Proper exercise and a monitored diet will control our calorie intake and help you avoid other unwanted medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. We owe it to ourselves and HCV survivors to change our unhealthy habits to ones better suited for really what our bodies need. **HepMag**fellow blogger Connie M. Welch has written an astounding article on liver disease and healthy eating. **You can find that article here**.
5. **Seek Treatment, Don't Wait** - If you've been diagnosed with Hepatitis C and your condition hasn't progressed and your dragon remains dormant, that is typically the best time to attack. I've seen many friends live their lives only to have their HCV rapidly progress in later years, resulting in liver cancer, cirrhosis and end stage liver disease [ESLD]. Just because your virus is at bay of the

past few years, you've been leading a symptom free life doesn't mean you can't treat. I cringe when I hear patients often prolonging liver treatment because they're okay... With new drugs rapidly coming on the market and available by the FDA, you owe it to yourself to fight for the cure, slay your dragon and move on with the next chapter of your life.**Seek treatment today, here is a list of doctors in your area to help you fight back and reclaim your life**.

6. **Get Adequate Rest and Replenishment** - Adults need 7-9 hours of sleep a night for the body to be fully rejuvenated for the day ahead. Many of us have crazy sleep cycles, our jobs and life get in the way and there are truly not enough hours in the day. But I can't express how important it is to get adequate rest at night. Be sure to not consume any caffeine after 6PM, and no alcohol! You shouldn't be using tobacco products first and foremost, and it's noted that tobacco use will actually keep your motor functions awake during prolonged periods of the night. Things like light, noise, hot rooms, uncomfortable bed or pillow will make your night even more cumbersome. Things like sleep masks for the eyes and ear plugs will reduce light and noise for a calm night of test. **Click Here to learn more about Healthy Habits While Living with Chronic Liver Disease**.
7. **Drink Water, Lots of Water** - This one is so easily overlooked, avoided and ignored, but essentially one of most important choices you'll make for your body. Whether you're on treatment, preparing or waiting, you still need to be drinking plenty of water daily. 64-72oz of water a day is a good threshold for water consumption. This can easily be divided up into 8-9 cups of water a day from breakfast until night. Your liver and kidneys work overtime while living with Hepatitis C to eliminate your body of toxins. Drinking water not only hydrates your body's cells, but helps promote kidney function to release toxins in the bloodstream and keep you from feeling sluggish. I recommend the **Waterlogged App** for assisting you with your water drinking habits, best part is it's free. **For more information on water consumption, follow this link**.
8. **Herbal Liver Supplements** - If you're waiting for liver treatment and in the process of scheduling a doctor, I highly recommend seeking some sort of herbal supplement to assist your liver function. Natural supplements like milk thistle, lipoic acid, selenium among others offer great health benefits if you're not currently on liver treatment. **For a list of the Top 5 Herbal Supplements Recommend for Liver Health, follow this link.**
9. **Faith & Spirituality** - For many, coping with the effects of chronic liver disease can be stressful. It can take a large toll on the mind and drain us of our vitality if we allow it to. Whatever faith or spirituality you believe in, often times having that hope of something greater can carry us through the darkest of times. I know it has for me, and I encourage anyone with Hepatitis C, HIV or Hemophilia to seek faith. It looks very different for very many people, but the benefits can give you peace of mind, calm your anxiety and reduce your stress levels so you can live a thriving life. For me, being a Christian provides me that level of comfort, peace and calm that no one else can offer. Sound mind for many is often times the best medicine.
10. **Develop Memory Skills** - It's noted that people living with Hepatitis suffer with memory skills, brain fog and or short-term memory loss. Don't panic if you become forgetful or stuck on a thought longer than a few minutes. To keep your brain active and healthy, it's good to develop techniques to help you stay sharp. Whether it's working a crossword puzzle, brainteasers, develop a hobby, play board games, learn a new language, play a challenging video game, or memorizing your most beloved quotes, any of these activities will increase your motor skills, improve your reflex time and allow you to decipher real world situations. There are many treatable conditions that cause cognitive impairment, so before we jump to conclusions, start with the basics.
11. **We Were Designed To Be Connected** - Living life in solidarity for some may seem like the the only way out, but having a group or circle of friends to go to in time of need is the best blessing. We're not meant to lead lonely lifestyles, we're designed to be connected with each other, share life, live life, rejoice in our triumphs and grieve in our trials. Establishing a small group of friends while living with Hepatitis C can provide a world of conversation, an outlet of frustration and the avenue for venting. It's not easy for some being open about their diseases, but if you're bold enough, the benefits truly outweigh the risk of being alone with your disease. Join a message forum, find friends in your local area you can connect and share life together in a support group. Much joy and relief comes from those who share the load. **Get connected today**!
12. **Think POZ** - When all else fails, laughter, being with friends and family, and immersing yourself in a healthier state of mind will change the way you look at the world. I was once told by a friend from

Kentucky, "*True happiness is 20% the body, 80% the mind*." Embrace every circumstance for what it is, and move on. Don’t dwell in the past, don’t linger on the would be, could be or should be’s of life. Focus your mind on those things that bring you joy, whether it’s soaking up sun on a beach, going fishing on weekends, a girls/guys night out or just going out to see a movie with a bunch of friends, any of these can distract your mind to help you develop more socailly. Hobbies, outdoor activities and changing your state of mind to refuse the negative and embrace the positive will make the road of living with Hepatitis C a little less rocky. Remember, you are not your disease!!! So stop acting like you’re a victim and act like the warrior you are meant to be; a dragon slayer.

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