5 Common Questions and Answers About Hepatitis C Treatment

If your previous treatment for hep C resulted in failure, can you undergo treatment again? This question, and others, answered here.

January 20, 2021 By Connie M. Welch

I did hep C treatment in the past that failed, am I eligible to be treated again? Most definitely yes! Just because the past treatment did not bring you the cure, does not mean it won't happen with the new treatment. Keep trying no matter what. You've got everything to gain from moving forward with the new treatment.

I'm hesitant about new treatment due to the harsh side effects I experienced with past treatment, what are the side effects like with new treatment? Every patient's treatment experience is a bit different but overall the new treatments today have considerably fewer side effects than older treatments like interferon and/or ribavirin. Interferon is no longer used in new treatments and there are several treatment options without ribavirin depending on your liver condition. Plus treatment is considerably shorter today with 8 to 12 weeks being the standard.

The most common treatment side effects today are fatigue, headache, possible brief period of insomnia, other side effects may occur but less common. All side effects can vary but many often cycle out and pass during treatment and recovery.

Be sure to talk to your physician about your medical condition and all medications you take as well as vitamin/supplements and herbs you take prior to starting treatment. Report all side effects you experience to your physician.

It's important to note that many patients report not experiencing any side effects. This is not necessarily common, but it can happen especially with improved treatments.

Will I be able to work and take care of my family while doing treatment? With the new treatment options today, the majority of patients can work and take care of their families while they are doing treatment. Depending on your overall medical condition, your physician can recommend best what you need to do. Under the American Disability Act, your job is protected while you are doing treatment and dealing with hep C. If you did need to take any time off to rest during treatment, it's best to let your employer know about your treatment. Your physician can also write a letter of medical need for leave if you or a family member who helps you as a caregiver needs to

take time off from work.

You may find you need to take some extra time to rest when you get home from work or have family or friends help out with extra chores during your treatment. Be flexible and most of all take time to take care of yourself. Hep C treatment is temporary compared to the rest of your life. Don't hesitate to ask others for help if you need it.

I was diagnosed with liver damage, can hep C treatment reverse my liver damage? This is a very good question. The goal of hep C treatment is to eliminate the virus and stop any further damage to the liver. The liver is an amazing organ that can regenerate healthy liver tissue from mild liver damage. Liver damage or scarring can vary in degree from no damage to mild damage (fibrosis) to severe scarring (cirrhosis).

Once I do treatment and receive the cure will hep C ever come back?

If the patient has completed the course of treatment and the hep C virus shows non-detected in the blood 12 weeks after treatment has been completed, the patient has achieved SVR (sustained virologic response) and considered cured. Your physician may test you again at 24 weeks post-treatment, but studies show very little difference in 12 and 24 weeks post-treatment. Since the hep C virus replicates in the body so rapidly, if the virus was still present 12 weeks after treatment it would show up.

With the high powered new treatment designed to target the virus-cell and destroy it, the new treatment offers a 90 to 99% cure rate. So there is very little chance of hep C reoccurrence once the patient has received SVR 12 weeks.

Do you have a question or comment about hep C treatment? Where are you in your journey with hep C?

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