Beginning Hep C Treatment

January 31, 2018 By Connie M. Welch

The preparation phase for treatment is very important. Knowledge is powerful. When patients prepare they are more likely to be proactive and handle treatment much easier.

While every Hep C patient's treatment and recovery experience is a bit different, here are some factors to consider; liver condition, treatment medication, any other medical conditions you have, other medications you take, and support.

What to Expect when Beginning Hep C Treatment:

- Standard treatment time is generally 12 weeks. But some patients may be eligible for 8 weeks of treatment and some patients may need to be on treatment for 24 weeks depending on liver condition. Ask your physician which treatment regimen is right for your condition.
- Once receiving your Hep C treatment medication the doctor and pharmacy will inform you how to take your medication. If you have any questions, call your physician or pharmacy that filled your medication.
- Ask your doctor what blood tests and other tests need to be done during and after treatment. Specifically ask when viral load tests and CBC tests will be done during and after treatment. Note these dates on your calendar.
- Once you receive a Non-Detected Viral Load test report during treatment it is very important you complete the entire course of your treatment and not stop. This helps insure the Hep C virus will be eliminated. Do not interrupt or alter taking your treatment medication for any reason unless your physician advises.
- Ask what treatment side effects can occur for your specific Hep C treatment. Not all Hep C treatment has the same side effects. This doesn't mean you will experience any or all of these side effects, but if you do then you know this is normal for treatment and not be alarmed.
- Ask your doctor if side effects do occur what medications are you allowed to take that will not

interfere with treatment or your liver condition. If these medications can be on hand ahead of time, this is a great help.

- Ask your doctor or specialty pharmacy if any of your Hep C treatment meds cause insomnia. They may recommend taking meds at a certain time of day to avoid interrupting sleep.
- Stock your pantry and fridge ahead of time and make some meals ahead. This helps if you experience fatigue you'll have some wholesome meals ready. Good nutrition is important. Avoid process foods as much as possible. Keep a little something on your stomach at all times. This will help your blood sugar to be more level and help with any nausea or stomach upset if this occurs.
- Prepare to drink lots of pure water on treatment. This helps keep you hydrated plus flushes your system, which is important on treatment.
- Rest is also very important while on treatment. Take time for rest stops and get in a nap when you can. Your body needs it while in treatment.
- Locate and start attending a support group. If a physical support group is not available in your area, join an online support group. Support goes along way in helping you through your treatment and recovery. Communicating with others who understand what you're experiencing and receiving help and encouragement is very important.

Most Common Hep C Treatment Side Effects: Please check each medication for side effect information.

The most common Hep C treatment side effect for all Hep C treatment is fatigue. Some patients reported not experiencing fatigue while some patients report mild to excess fatigue. Energy can fluctuate during treatment. If you experience fatigue, take rest stops or naps when you are able. Extra rest is good while on treatment. Make sure to report fatigue to your physician and ask about a blood test to check your red blood count to avoid severe anemia.

The other common side effects from Hep C treatment are headache and mild insomnia. Less side effects reported were mild stomach upset. Majority of side effects often fluctuate and get better or pass during treatment.

Side effects can vary depending on what Hep C medication is used. If ribavirin is used, there may be addition side effects such as anxiety, insomnia, low red blood count (anemia).

Many times patients can be dealing with more than one medical condition. Example, you may

have Hep C but also have cirrhosis, or a heart condition, an auto immune condition, or even be diabetic, etc… It can be hard for patients to know if they are experiencing symptoms or side effects from Hep C or if this could be a separate medical condition. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about all medications you are taking and be informed about symptoms from other medical conditions you may have.

*If you do experience any side effects be sure to let your liver specialist know.

Above all remember Hep C treatment is working for you to rid you from Hep C. This is a temporary time compared to the rest of your life. You can do this!

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