The Facts about Hep C Treatment

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Phase 1 of Hep C generally consists of Hep C diagnosis, testing and preparing for Hep C treatment. The 2nd phase of Hep C is treatment. This is your time to defeat the Hep C virus. Here are some facts about Hep C treatment you need to know.

The goal of Hep C treatment is to cure the virus. Chronic Hepatitis C is treated with drugs to eliminate the virus from the body and prevent further liver damage.

To help determine which Hep C treatment is best suited for each patient will depend on genotype (genetic virus strain), viral load (RNA), liver condition, Hep C treatment history and tolerance, and overall health conditions.

Blood tests and physical exams will take place all throughout treatment and post treatment recovery. Viral load tests can take place as early as 2 to 4 weeks from beginning of treatment and continue through 12 weeks of completion of treatment. Many physicians will continue to test patients to 24 weeks or longer post treatment.

When HCV is undetected in the blood for 12 weeks from when treatment has been completed, the patient has achieved what is known as SVR12 (sustained virologic response) and considered cured.

Genotype describes the type of virus strain of Hep C. The World Health Organization reports there are 11 genotypes of Hep C with distinct subtypes identified throughout the world. Certain genotypes are prevalent in certain countries and some specific to certain countries. There are 6 different genotypes of Hep C with multiple subtypes which are in most parts of the world. 75% of Hep C patients from the US have genotype 1a or b. Genotypes 2, 3 and 4 are less common in the US.

Great Improvement in Treatment

In 2011 the FDA approved the first generation of protease inhibitors to be used in triple therapy with standard combination treatment of Peginterferon and Ribavirin. For the first time a cure to eliminate the Hep C virus was available. The cure rate was 70% using one of the two protease inhibitors in triple therapy with standard treatment time of 24 to 48 weeks but these treatments often had harsh side effects.

Since a 2011 when treatment with protease inhibitors first rode into town we've seen a whole new

generation of direct acting anti-virals come on the scene and greatly improved treatment.

A variety of new treatments have brought options; with and without the use of Peginterferon and Ribavirin, expanded treatment options for different genotypes, higher cure rates of 90% to 99%, less treatment side effects and shorter treatment time to 8 to 12 weeks being the new standard. With certain genotypes and liver conditions, some treatments may be recommended to 24 weeks.

Clinical trials are currently in progress with new treatments for a variety of genotypes and conditions.

Stay tuned next week when we discuss Common Questions and Answers regarding Hep C Treatment.

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