Hemochromatosis and Hepatitis C

May 29, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

Hemochromatosis is a condition that can be associated with hepatitis C. Hemochromatosis is a dangerous condition which can damage your liver and other major organs.

Hemochromatosis is a metabolic disorder which is also genetic, which is also commonly referred to as hereditary hemochromatosis. Hereditary hemochromatosis is also commonly referred to as iron overload disorder.

Iron is an essential component for blood production. Approximately 70 percent of your body's iron is found in red blood cells (hemoglobin) and in the muscle cells (myoglobin). Hemoglobin is needed for transferring oxygen in your blood from your lungs to the tissues in your body.

Excess iron is stored in the body's tissues and organs, mainly the skin, heart, liver, pancreas and the joints.

Hemochromatosis causes your body to absorb too much iron from the food you eat. The body cannot get rid itself of excess iron. Excess iron can lead to damaged tissues and organs.

If the hepatitis C patient has hemochromatosis and it's left untreated, it can accelerate liver damage, along with heart problems, and diabetes.

Some medical studies suggest elevated iron levels can commonly be seen in hepatitis C patients in which excess iron can feed the hepatitis c virus replication, but this is not conclusive.

There are four types of hereditary hemochromatosis. Type 1, 2, 3, and 4. These are typically classified by age and other factors such as genetic cause of mode of inheritance.

The most common form of hereditary hemochromatosis is type 1 and type 4, which begin in adult midlife.

Type 2 hemochromatosis is known typically begins in children and by the early 20's iron accumulation causes significant changes in sex hormones and can lead to other organ damage.

Type 3 hemochromatosis can range between type 1 and 2 with symptoms beginning before age 30.

Symptoms

- Fatigue
- Joint pain
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Loss of sex drive
- If the condition becomes worse, patients may develop arthritis, liver diseases like cirrhosis or liver cancer, diabetes, heart problems, and skin discoloration.The severity of symptoms can be affected by environmental and lifestyle factors like the amount of iron in the diet, alcohol use, and infections.

Treatment
Since the body cannot rid itself of excess iron, treatment includes regularly removing blood from the body. The body's iron is contained in red blood cells.

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It is recommended hepatitis C patients have regular blood work to test iron levels to make sure they are not elevated and be closely monitored.

If you have hepatitis C, have you been tested for elevated iron levels? Do you have a question or comment about hemochromatosis and hepatitis C?

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