3 Common Questions about Hep C Recurrence and Steps to Avoid Reinfection

June 17, 2021 By Connie M. Welch

A concern most Hep C patients have after Hep C treatment is the possibility of Hep C recurring, be it on its own or the danger of reinfection.

Here are three most common questions asked by Hep C patients concerning recurrence and reinfection:

1. What is the possibility of Hep C returning after I've finished treatment?
2. Can I become reinfected with Hep C after I've finished treatment and told I'm cured?
3. What preventive steps can I take to avoid reinfection?

What is the possibility of Hep C returning after I've finished treatment? This is a great question. If you have completed Hep C treatment and achieved an SVR 12 (sustained virologic response meaning the Hep C virus was Non-Detected in your body 12 weeks after completing Hep C treatment) then you are considered cured of Hep C.

Majority of physicians do follow up viral load tests at 24 weeks after treatment to confirm but medical studies show there is very little difference between 12 and 24 weeks. Studies show patients have a less than >1% chance of the Hep C virus returning on it's on, without reinfection.

Can I become reinfected with Hep C after I've finished treatment and told I'm cured? Dr. Rena K. Fox M.D, stated, *"The chance of another infection with hepatitis C is much less than the first-time of infection, but it is not impossible. It has happened in people who continue to use injection drugs, and some studies suggest that it happens even more in people who are also HIV positive."*

The same preventive measures to avoid Hep C infection in the first place should be observed in all cases.

It is possible that you could become reinfected with a different genotype than what you had, or even with the same genotype. Again, having Hep C once doesn't make you immune from Hep C no matter what the genotype is nor does it make you immune from Hep A or B. There is no vaccine for Hep C. There are vaccines for Hep A & Hep B. It is an important preventive step for you to get

these vaccines.

What preventive steps can I take to avoid Hep C reinfection? Dr. Rena K. Fox M.D, states, *"The best way to avoid reinfection is to reduce risky behaviors that can result in exposure to the hepatitis C virus: Do not use injection drugs, do not share needles for any reason, avoid blood-to-blood exposure with others, and use condoms if you are sexually active with a new partner or a partner who has used injection drugs."*

Here are further preventive steps to avoid Hep C reinfection:

- Do not share personal items with others like razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, nail clippers or other personal items. If you have completed Hep C treatment a good step would be to throw away old razors, toothbrushes and toothpaste and replace with new ones. You can soak your nail clippers and personal care equipment in alcohol to clean them.
- Wear latex gloves when you are helping someone dress an open wound.
- Use recommended safety measures if you are exposed to blood or needle sticks.
- Do not share needles.
- Practice safe sex.The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that the Hep C virus can be passed during sexual contact, yet it is a low risk if a person has one, long-term steady sexual partner. However, having multiple sex partners, or HIV, or engaging in rough sex can increase the risk of spreading the virus during sex.
- Use clean needles and equipment for tattoos or body piercings.
- Cover a cut, wound or sore with a clean sterile bandage immediately. It's a good idea to keep band-aids in your wallet or purse in case you get cut away from home.
- Clean all surfaces thoroughly after they have come in contact with blood. The CDC recommends any blood spills, including dried blood, which can still be infectious, should be cleaned using a dilution of one part household bleach to 10 parts water. Gloves should be worn with cleaning up blood spills. The Hep C virus can survive outside the body at room temperature, on environmental surfaces, for up to 3 weeks.

For more detailed about Hep C download the free guidebook, "3 Phases of Hep C Treatment; Your Guidebook from Diagnosis through Recovery" from our website, Life Beyond Hep C.com.

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