Hepatitis C and Sleep

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The worst thing in the world is to try to sleep and not to. ~ F. Scott Fitzgerald

Being tired is a common hepatitis C symptom. However, before blaming fatigue on hepatitis C, rule out other causes, including sleep disorders. Or perhaps you have a sleep disorder that is related to hepatitis C or liver disease in general. There are many types of sleep disorders, and one of the worst is insomnia.

Insomnia can test the nerves of even the most resilient person. The dark hours of night are lonely and unsettling when we are afraid or worried about having hepatitis C. What is this ache, this pain? Is this something I should be concerned about? Will I ever feel well again? What will happen to my family if I die early? These thoughts, more easily managed in the comfort of daylight; can feel like hell in the dense blackness of 3 a.m.

For nearly fifty years, I have battled night terrors, a sleep disorder that began when I was nine. I am familiar with demons so awful, that even a calm person would feel tortured. The blessing of night terrors is that I had to learn how to manage unwanted nighttime intrusions, and I came up with practices that help me sleep.

- The bedroom is a worry-free zone. If I want to worry, I need to get out of bed and go to another room.
- Create a sleep sanctuary. The bedroom should be quiet and comfortable. If noise wakes you up, wear good ear plugs.
- Learn how to make friends with the dark side. Those things that wake me up, are trying to tell me something. I let my fears tell their stories, so I can reassure them, “There, there, everything is all right.” I welcome demons with the understanding that they are allowed only short visits, preferably during the daytime.
- Take toys and self-defense weapons to bed. Next to my bed is an ipod with stories and music, a flashlight, a journal, and some favorite keepsakes that remind me I am safe.

A good night’s sleep is one of life’s best joys. If you are not sleeping well, find out why, and then do something about it.

For more information about sleep: http://www.sleepfoundation.org/

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