Hepatitis C and the Importance of Liver Cancer Screening

March 13, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

Being at risk doesn't mean you'll definitely get liver cancer. But regular screening exams means if cancer was present your doctor can find it early. Early diagnosis means the chance for successfully treating it are the greatest.

Being proactive means, you need to pay attention to your body and any changes. If you begin to turn jaundice or have weight loss, or if you feel bad in any way let your doctor know immediately.

It's important to know, many times there are no sighs or outward symptoms of cysts, tumors or cancer that is why regular testing is so important.

Testing
Liver specialists like hepatologists and gastroenterologists (physicians who specialize in liver disease), may recommend hepatitis C patients and patients with cirrhosis to be tested every 6 months to once a year with:

- Ultrasound (sonograms) every 6 months.
- Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) blood test every six months

Higher Risk Factors for Liver Cancer
Patients who have had hepatitis C for an extended period of time are at higher risk for cirrhosis and liver cancer. Even after treatment for hepatitis C, this does not remove the risk factor for cancer.

Patients who have been treated for hepatitis C and cured of the virus but have cirrhosis are at high risk for liver cancer and should be closely monitored with testing.

MD Anderson and the Mayo Clinic state these are the conditions that increase your risk for cirrhosis and liver cancer: You're at increased risk if you have chronic hepatitis B infection or cirrhosis of the liver. Below are medical conditions that may eventually increase your risks for cirrhosis of the liver.

- Chronic hepatitis C infection

- Primary biliary cirrhosis (PBC)
- Autoimmune hepatitis
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)
- Inherited metabolic disease, including:
    - Hemochromatosis
    - Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency
    - Glycogen storage disease
    - Porphyria cutanea tarda
    - Tryosinemia

Treatment for hepatitis C is important to eliminate the virus from causing further damage to the liver.

Be proactive, talk with your doctor if you have hepatitis C, cirrhosis or any of the above conditions and ask to be tested for liver cancer. After treatment for hepatitis C continue to see your doctor for recommended follow up tests for your condition.

You can’t treat what you don’t know is there. Testing can help save your life.

Have you been tested for cirrhosis and liver cancer? We’d love to hear your experience, questions, and input.

This entry was originally published in Life Beyond Hep C, and is reprinted with permission.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/hepatitis-c-importance-liver-cancer-screening