Hepatitis C May Take Years off Your Life

September 3, 2014 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

If you are thinking about delaying hepatitis C treatment, consider this: a review of mortality data found that those with hepatitis B or C die an average of **22 to 23 years earlier** than those who don't have viral hepatitis.

In a study by Kathleen Ly and colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were 18,473 deaths associated with viral hepatitis (A, B, or C) in 2010; nearly 93% of these were from hepatitis C. The vast majority of these deaths occurred in the 45-64 age group. This is my age group; the age group of my siblings and peers. This is too young to die, especially from a preventable, curable disease.

Not only do hepatitis C-positive people die younger, we die **A LOT** younger from causes in addition to hepatitis B or C. Causes of death listed for the 45-65 age group of people with hepatitis B or C were:

- Liver or bile duct cancer
- Liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and other liver diseases
- Alcohol-related liver disease
- Gastrointestinal hemorrhage
- HIV infection
- Kidney failure
- Septicemia (A potentially life-threatening blood infection)

It doesn't have to be this way. Here is what you can do:

- Get treated for hepatitis C. Antiviral therapy has improved tremendously in the past year, and is slated to be even better in early October 2014.
- Be vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

- Don’t drink or use recreational drugs. If this is a problem for you, consider getting help with this. It’s hard; I won’t pretend it isn’t. However, I know it is possible to live a life that is free of addiction, a life beyond one’s wildest dreams. You don’t have to do it alone.
- Urge every Baby Boomer you know to be tested for hepatitis C. Baby Boomers were born from 1945 through 1965.

Don’t wait too long. Dying 22-23 years early means losing a third of your life. Life is short enough as it is, and now that I am free of hepatitis C, I feel like I am just getting started.

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/hepatitis-c-mortality