



The New Hepatitis C Drugs and Interactions

July 29, 2014 By [Lucinda K. Porter RN](#)

✖ Hepatitis C treatment improves with each new approval by the Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)). The biggest advances came with the approval of [Olysio](#) (simeprevir) and [Sovaldi](#) (sofosbuvir). Both drugs specifically target the hepatitis C virus, and are classified as direct-acting antivirals, or DAAs. Olysio is a protease inhibitor, and Sovaldi is a polymerase inhibitor. Both offer hope with higher cure rates and easier to tolerate regimens.

Olysio and Sovaldi were each approved separately by the FDA. Although they were not approved for use together, many doctors are prescribing them in combination. This practice is called *off-label use*, and it is perfectly legal. In hepatitis C patients with genotype 1, stage 3 or 4 fibrosis, this combination was successful approximately 94% of the time. Most patients' insurance plans are covering this treatment, although some are denied the first time, and approved on appeal.

Quite a few people on the [Hep Forums](#) are taking [Olysio and Sovaldi](#). It is a joy to watch them, as most are doing quite well. More than a few say that they feel better than they have in years; a few are dealing with some side effects. [Photosensitivity](#) seems to be the biggest problem.

An issue I am noticing is that some of the reported side effects may be drug interactions. Olysio and Sovaldi have the potential to interact with drugs, herbs, and other supplements. It's a good idea to talk your doctor about potential drug and supplement interactions before starting a new drug.

Although many substances have the potential to interact with the new hepatitis C medications, this doesn't mean you can't take drugs that may potentially interact. It usually means that your doctor or pharmacist will need to advise you on how to space out the timing of your medications.

To find out if your medications or supplements might interact with your hepatitis C drugs, check out this site: [hep-druginteractions](#). If you find a potential interaction, talk to your medical provider. Never stop taking a medication unless under medical advice, as abrupt discontinuation can be harmful.

One final note for those who are wondering about the [cost of combining Olysio and Sovaldi](#). Despite the \$56,000 price tag for Olysio and \$84,000 for Sovaldi, the combination is cost effective. In the July 2014, [Hepatology](#), Liesl Hagen and colleagues analyzed the treatment choices, and found that for genotype 1 patients who are interferon-intolerant, a 12-week course of Olysio and Sovaldi costs less than 24 weeks of Sovaldi and ribavirin.

Please take note insurance companies. It would cost you less and help patients more if you just approved [Olysio and Sovaldi](#) treatment without forcing patients to endure a frustrating appeal process.

Let's move on to the business of curing hepatitis C.

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