How to Prepare for Hep C Triple Therapy, Part 2

May 26, 2013 By Connie M. Welch

In Preparing for Hep C Triple Therapy you need understanding of treatment side effects and how to deal with them effectively. Learn helpful tools and tips that have worked for other Hep C patients in their treatment experience.

We continue today with part 2, Physical preparation. See part 1 in How to Prepare for Hep C Triple Therapy. See continued articles on Preparing; Emotionally, Mentally, Spiritually and Financially.

How to Deal with Side Effects: Proven Helpful Tools & Tips

1. Make a Med Chart from the computer or notebook and keep by your meds. Write down when you take each med. This will help you remember when you took your meds when you're not feeling well, or having concentration issues (brain fog).

2. Have a Notebook placed in Kitchen or Bathroom (wherever you'll see it often) to serve as a Central Communication Tool. This helps when you are fatigued and experiencing concentration issues or brain fog side effects. This helps relieve frustration for you and your family. You and your family write down important notes or messages that you will need to remember.

3. Have a Calendar handy, place by your Communication Notebook. This helps to remember doctor's appointments and blood work, as well as other important appointments & occasions. Note the date you begin treatment (Mile Marker Day) and check off each week of treatment. But don't look at the long haul, keep focused on getting to your next weekly Mile Marker.

4. Plan and prepare some meals ahead. Make freezer size portions. Also shop and stock your pantry with soups, crackers, peanut butter, and if you are taking Incivek, plan your fats.5. It is best to keep something on your stomach at all times. Ensure nutritional drinks, crackers, energy bars, nuts, these are quick and convenient. This helps with nausea.

6. Also make sure you purchase ahead: The following three are generally for Incivek side effects: It's important to note: Not all patients experience rectal burning and itching. Some patients report more body rash and itching. Report all symptoms to your doctor. There are prescription medications to help.

- Preparation H cream and/or suppositories for rectal burning/itching.
- Charmin or other brand moist toweletts, flushable, very soothing and cooling if you experience

rectal burning/itching side effects.

- Tucks Wipes for rectal burning/itching.

For all treatment:

- Benedryl cream for skin itching/rash and Benedryl pills or liquid.
- Tyelenol extra strength or other brand, to relieve fever, aches.
- Tyelenol PM or other over the counter sleep aid if needed.
- Cough meds and Cough drops or Lifesavers.
- Gyloxide solution (over the counter) for mouth/caner sores.
- Biotin Mouth rinse for dry mouth.
- Lotions and oils for dry skin.
- Vitamin C and other general multi-vitamins.
- B-12 tablets help with energy.

*** Prescription medication are sometimes needed if skin rash and itching develops. See your doctor if you develop these symptoms.

7. It is very important to drink plenty of pure water while on treatment. This helps to keep you hydrated, your meds work properly and helps with side effects.

8. Some patients have reported certain food cravings while on treatment. Be prepared for your taste buds to change and possibly not want to eat. Ensure nutritional drinks or smoothies are good. If taking Incivek to get your fat requirement, you can add full fat ice cream or cream to smoothies or ensure drinks. Talk with your doctor or nurse for more fat intake ideas.

9. Ask your doctor ahead for a prescription for nausea and vomiting. I like to go on the premise, it’s better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it. This is also important because you don’t need to miss a dose of your medication due to nausea or vomiting. Some examples of anti-nausea meds are Pheneran, Zoforan, Emetrol.

Tip: Zoforan tablet worked best for me. It is a small tablet that dissolves quickly on your tongue and works within 15 minutes to relieve nausea & vomiting.

10. Regular blood work should be done throughout treatment. If low red blood count, or anemia occurs, your doctor may adjust your medication or prescribe Procrit or like injections to boost the bone marrow to producing more red blood cells. In some cases, blood transfusions have been needed.

11. Avoid being around anyone you know is sick during your treatment. Due to treatment it is normal if your white blood count drops and your immune system is suppressed leaving you at greater risk to infections. Be sure to talk to your doctor before traveling any long distance.

12. Depression is a very common side effect of treatment. Treatment meds are so strong they chemically alter the way you feel. This is not an emotional or mental issue, this is physical with treatment.

My doctor recommended I start Anti-depressant 3 weeks prior to beginning treatment. It takes several weeks for the Anti-Depressant to get into your system. It's easier to get ahead of depression and anxiety than treat it when it's already hit you.

Some doctors recommend 'to wait and see how you're feel.' Personally I've done treatment three times. The first two times were without any Anti-depressants and the third treatment I listened to my doctor and took one.

It made a big difference and I'm so glad I did. It's a preventive tool to help with side effects and help you get further down the treatment road.

13. Be prepared for Hair Thinning. Most patients on treatment do not lose all their hair like some chemo therapy patients but significant hair thinning is a common side effect of treatment, both with Incivek and Victrelis with Peg Interferon and Ribavirin.

Try not to be disturbed about this. Remember, the meds are working for you to rid your body of Hep C. This is temporary compared to the rest of your life. And all hair grows back.

14. Memory lapses or Concentration issues, commonly known on treatment as Brain Fog are a common side effect. Don't be alarmed if you experience this.

This is temporary and will go away after treatment is completed. Use your communication notebook and chart your meds. Ask family members and friends to help you by reminding you and also to write messages down on your notebook.

15. Blurred vision or sun light sensitivity have been reported, but this is temporary and clears up. Report this symptom to your doctor if you experience this.

16. Fatigue is the most common of all side effects and generally last's throughout the entire treatment. You will experience a variety of good days when your energy is up.

Rest, drink plenty of water, and accept help from others.

***This is important to remember about all side effects, they generally cycle out. Don't get caught up in faulty thinking whatever your feeling is the way you're going to feel the whole treatment time. You will have good, bad and ugly days.

Important Note: Not all Hep C Patient Experiences are the same. Not all patients experience all of the side effects listed.

Check back for Part 3, How to Prepare for Hep C Triple Therapy, Emotionally/Mentally, Spiritually and Financially & Medical Leave from Work.

Do you have a question or comment about treatment side effects? Do you have a helpful tip for dealing with side effects?

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