Relief from Itching with Hepatitis C and Cirrhosis by Hep C Patient John

November 7, 2018 By Connie M. Welch

Hepatitis C and cirrhosis symptoms can often be silent to mysterious. While in the beginning stages of hepatitis C patients many times do not experience any symptoms until liver damage becomes severe such as cirrhosis.

Hep C and cirrhosis patients can sometimes experience itching known as pruritis. It has been stated that pruritus is one of the most common symptoms reported by 20% of people with hepatitis C, but it's more commonly found in people with advanced liver disease and cirrhosis.

As stated by HCV Advocate, "Experts believe pruritus (itching) in people with liver disease is due to the accumulation of toxins (such as bilirubin) that are not effectively processed or filtered by the damaged liver."

Itching can range from mild to interrupting with sleep. Here's how Hep C/Cirrhosis patient John found relief.

Hep C Warrior John P.

Prior to being diagnosed with Hepatitis C I never experienced any itching. It came on all of the sudden and I didn't relate it to Hep C at first. At the time I was not aware I had cirrhosis. I had not gone through any treatment yet for Hep C.

The itching was intense, especially at night it was all over but my feet, face, and stomach seemed to be where most of it was concentrated. This was abnormal itching that goes all over the body and doesn't go away.

I was diagnosed with Hep C in July 2010 and in November 2017 I was diagnosed with compensated cirrhosis. I had not done any Hep C treatment until 2018.

I first thought it was an allergy. I changed everything I thought might be causing it like laundry detergent, shampoo, bed linens, but nothing worked. My doctor prescribed antihistamines. I also tried Benedryl, Clairnex, but nothing helped relieve the intense itching.

I did some research and found a drug which seems to offer relief for itching, Prevalite which is also a Cholestyramine, also sold under other names. I reached out to others who had been living with

cirrhosis and Hep C much longer than I had, where they found relief with Prevalite.

Prevalite is mainly used for lowering cholesterol, but it also lowers bilirubin levels which is what causes the itching when the liver isn't working 100%.

From my experience, my doctor couldn't figure out why I was itching and didn't make the connection between Hep C and cirrhosis. It's a major symptom that would have continued to go untreated or diagnosed if it were not for talking about this with more experienced people.

I talked to my Hep C doctor about checking into this and sure enough, she gave me a prescription for Prevalite. After the first week of taking it, I said goodbye to itching. It comes in powder form in individual packs you take twice a day by mixing it with juice or water.

In the first 7 days, I began taking it the itching stopped. Now I occasionally take it once or twice if I need to but for the most part, the itching is not intense any longer. It has improved greatly and I have relief.

As for side effects from Prevalite, all I've experienced is some slight acid reflux and heartburn, but nothing bad.

Please note: When taking cholestyramine medications like Prevalite, Questran, and others may be effective. These drugs are bile acid binders that attach to bile acids in the blood and help eliminate them from the body. They can also interfere with the absorption of other medications, so other drugs should be taken at least two hours before or after bile acid binders. Please consult with your doctor and pharmacist about all medications you take and when to take them.

My advice to others who have Hep C and cirrhosis would be to ask your doctor a lot of questions. Be proactive. Find out what the symptoms are with Hep C and cirrhosis in case you experience them. Get involved with a support group and seek out people who have solid experience and not full of drama. If you ask a question to 10 people and 8 of them tell you the same thing most likely you're getting some good advice, however, always discuss things with your doctors.

Change your diet and start eating healthy. I cut out red meat in my diet as well as regular milk. About once a month I may have red meat but I switched to Almond milk and love it. I eat a lot of fresh fruit, veggies, and whole grains. I eat chicken, fish, and pasta but everything I eat is made from scratch, nothing processed.

Make a gradual change to foods that are healthy. Don't drink any alcohol. If you find this hard to do, get some help. Your life depends on it.

Simply put, if you have liver disease, stress, alcohol, drugs, unhealthy high fat and processed food along with little exercise will take your life. We can't turn back the hands of time but we can change how we live out our life. If you've been diagnosed with Hep C, seek treatment and don't give up.

If a dirt-poor old dude like me can get treatment so can you, so be consistent, don’t quit! God smiles on the persistent. Never give up on hope or yourself and walk away five minutes before the miracle happens.

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