




# What You Need to Know about the Newest Hepatitis C Drug Sovaldi

December 10, 2013 By [Lucinda K. Porter RN](#)

---

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved Gilead Sciences' *Sovaldi* (sofosbuvir). Hepatitis C patients have been waiting for this moment for quite some time. Now that Sovaldi is here, hepatitis C patients are anxious to get started on their treatment. However, there are things you need to know about Sovaldi before you can start.

**Interferon is still part of treatment for most patients.** Treatment for genotypes 2 and 3 uses Sovaldi plus ribavirin, making it the first interferon-free treatment. As expected, Sovaldi will be used with peginterferon and ribavirin for patients with genotypes 1 and 4.

Patients are disappointed, hoping that treatment would be all-oral for everyone. However, the FDA opened the door for all-oral hepatitis C treatment by sanctioning a broader application of sofosbuvir. In addition to genotype 2 and 3 patients, Sovaldi plus ribavirin may be used for patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer) who are waiting for a liver transplant and genotype 1 patients who cannot use interferon.

**Sovaldi is expensive.** The wholesale acquisition cost of twelve weeks of Sovaldi is \$84,000 or \$1000 a pill. This does not include the cost of peginterferon, ribavirin, labs, medical costs, and drugs for side effects. Since genotype 3 patients will need 24 weeks of treatment, the cost would be \$168,000. A 48-week treatment for hepatocellular carcinoma patients awaiting transplant would be just under a half a million.

**Will insurance cover Sovaldi?** Who knows. My guess is that they will pay for it, since it is cheaper than the medical costs related to the potential complications of hepatitis C.

Here is a brief summary of Sovaldi. I've provided the prescribing information for those who want to read more.

## **Sovaldi with ribavirin for the treatment of adults with genotypes 2 or 3**

### **Pros**

- No peginterferon

- Short 12-week treatment duration for genotype 2, with limited exposure to ribavirin/ 24 weeks

of treatment for genotype 3 patients

High cure rate at around 93-95% overall for genotype 2

- o Cirrhosis 60-94%
- o Hardest to treat (genotype 1, cirrhosis, IL28B non-C/C, high viral load) 71%

Improved cure rate at around 84% overall for genotype 3

- o Cirrhosis 60-92%
- o Hardest to treat (genotype 1, cirrhosis, IL28B non-C/C, high viral load) 71%

Easier to tolerate side effect profile

Once daily pill

Highest rate of response in Blacks 87% vs. Non-blacks at 91%

Low drug-resistance profile

Fewer known drug interactions than other direct-acting antivirals (Incivek, Victrelis, and Olysio)

## **Cons**

- Ribavirin side effects
- Cost

## **Sovaldi in combination with peginterferon and ribavirin for adults with genotype 1 or 4**

### **Pros**

Short 12-week treatment duration, with limited exposure to peginterferon and ribavirin, which translates into an easier to tolerate side effect profile

High cure rate at around 90% overall

- o Genotype 1 89%; genotype 4 96%
- o Cirrhosis 80%

o Hardest to treat (genotype 1, cirrhosis, IL28B non-C/C, high viral load) 71%

Once daily pill

Highest rate of response in Blacks 87% vs. Non-blacks at 91%

Low drug-resistance profile

Fewer known drug interactions than other direct-acting antivirals (Incivek, Victrelis, and Olysio)

## **Cons**

- Peginterferon and ribavirin side effects
- Cost
- Treatment not approved for genotypes 5 or 6 yet

Ten years ago, I endured 48 weeks of difficult treatment and had about a 50/50 chance of clearing hepatitis C. I didn't win that bet. This year, the odds were stacked in my favor. Treatment was much easier, and shorter with only 12 weeks of treatment. And best of all, now I am cure. Despite the price, and the fact that interferon and ribavirin are still part of the hepatitis C treatment regimen, Sovaldi is a game changer.

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-newest-hepatitis-c-drug-sovaldi>