
Hepatitis C: Protecting Your Liver

Taking good care of yourself is the best way to prevent health problems linked to the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Give your liver a fighting chance. This means staying away from things that can make liver damage worse. And help your body defend against the HCV by staying healthy.

Watch medicines and supplements

Some medicines and herbal supplements can harm your liver. To protect yourself:

- Check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before taking anything that you buy over the counter. This includes herbal medicines. The FDA does not regulate them. So it may be hard to know which ones could harm your liver.
- Learn the generic and brand names for over-the-counter products that may harm your liver. Know the many combination medicines that have acetaminophen in them.
- Make sure you tell any healthcare provider who prescribes medicine for you that you have hepatitis C.
- If you have cirrhosis, get specific instructions from your healthcare provider. Don't take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as naproxen and ibuprofen. They can hurt your kidney if you have cirrhosis.

Don't drink alcohol

Your liver works hard to process alcohol. If you have HCV infection, drinking alcohol may make you more likely to get cirrhosis. You may also develop it faster. It is not known if there is a safe amount of alcohol to drink. It's best to not drink any alcohol. If you drink alcohol and have trouble stopping, ask your provider for help.

Get tested

Make sure you get tested for hepatitis A and hepatitis B. There are vaccines against them. Talk with your healthcare provider about getting the shots. If you have viral hepatitis, you should also be checked for HIV.

Stay healthy

Your body's immune system fights against infections. It's more able to do this when your body is healthy. Eating healthy foods, exercising most days of the week, and getting plenty of sleep will help keep your body strong. And staying upbeat can help you keep hepatitis C in perspective. You can also help protect your liver by:

- Staying at a healthy weight
- Keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in a healthy range
- Controlling diabetes, if you have the disease
- Keeping scheduled follow-up appointments