

Accomplishing Your Journey

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The information in this booklet, including the side effect management tips, is presented as a general guide and is **not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice.**

Your healthcare provider will always have the final decision on patient management, medications, and treatment options, and should be your primary source of information about your medical condition and treatment.



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Congratulations!...

It has been a long journey, and you've made it!

As with any journey, it isn't the same for everyone. For some, triple therapy treatment will have reached the goal of ridding their bodies of hepatitis C virus (HCV).

For others, there may have been various rates of success or detours in treatment.

In either case, continued follow-up with your healthcare provider is still an essential part of the next phase of your journey and your ongoing health.

Lab work and routine visits, though less frequent than before, will help your healthcare provider help you stay healthy.

Waning of Side Effects

As soon as 1 to 2 months after completing treatment, you may notice that treatment side effects are waning.

You should start seeing:

- An increase in your energy
- Beginning of a return of any hair loss

- Correction of altered tastes you may have had
- Elimination of any flu-like symptoms you had experienced from treatment side effects
- Relief from any itching or rashes

If you experienced the following:

- Depression
- Anemia

And you still feel any symptoms from those, like extreme fatigue that does not improve with rest, or continual and long-lasting feelings of sadness, you should follow up with your healthcare provider and formulate a plan to treat these immediately.

Schedule Your Follow-ups

Appointment	Date	Time	Location
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Nutrition and Exercise

Two things that will help ensure you get back to yourself and have lifelong health are nutrition and exercise.

Nutrition

- Do not drink alcohol. Even though you are done with treatment, your liver still needs all the care it can get, and alcohol strains your liver.
- Eat a healthy diet. It should be low in fat, cholesterol, salt, and sugar, with enough protein, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits to get all your nutrients.
- Eat smaller meals more often instead of a couple of large meals per day.
- Stay away from fast foods and try not to eat processed foods, including canned, frozen, and preserved foods. They can have a lot of sodium and chemical additives in them.

Keep up with any good nutritional habits you formed while on treatment!



Exercise

- Try exercising for 10 to 15 minutes, 2 to 3 times every day.
- If you are not used to physical activity, start slowly and for shorter periods. For example, try gentle stretching or mild exercise, like walking or low-impact aerobics.
- Exercise can also be a great way to socialize, which you may have done less of while on treatment, and will help you combat any residual feelings of depression or isolation.
- Be sure to check with your healthcare provider before starting any new exercise routine.

Remember

The effects of the medication are still ongoing ...

Pregnancy must be avoided for a period of time even AFTER treatment has ended.

- This applies during treatment and for 4 months after treatment is finished.
- Men treated with ribavirin should not father any children for at least 7 months after the treatment is finished.

It would be wise to continue to avoid alcohol.

Even if you feel fine, you may still have inflammation of your liver. So be sure to continue to check with your healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements.

Preventing Reinfection

Remember the common routes that HCV is spread and avoid reinfection. A person may become infected by:

- Using injection drugs, even once
- Receiving kidney dialysis over a long period of time
- Having unprotected sex with an infected partner (being infected this way is rare, but is more likely for people with many partners)
- Coming into contact with blood from an infected person

Preventing Spread of HCV

If you still have HCV in your blood, you don't want to pass that on. Keep up with the protective measures you started on therapy:

- Practice safer sex.
- Don't share toiletries.
- Care for open wounds
- If you use needles (eg, for diabetes) dispose of them safely.

The Finish Line

You have completed therapy and are awaiting confirmation.

At the end of your follow-up period, your journey will hopefully come to an end with sustained virologic response (SVR).

Following a healthy lifestyle, as presented in this booklet, will help you to regain your health.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why me?

Let this question go. Nobody can answer it. Don't look back. Look ahead. Accept the challenge. Your personal commitment is called for now. Battle the disease with your doctor and your family. You can win.

Do I have a chance of regaining my health?

The answer is Yes.

The chances of conquering hepatitis C have never been as good as they are today. Intensive research and development has resulted over the past number of years in the development of treatments that enable many hepatitis C patients to conquer the virus. You can be one of them.

Might I infect my partner or my family?

Hepatitis C is transferred by exposure to blood. If you take certain precautions, you can protect those around you very well without having to do without love and affection on a day-to-day basis. You should definitely tell your partner and everybody close to you about your disease. You will find support from the people around you. Community brings strength.

Do I have to tell my employer?

You are not obliged to tell your employer about your hepatitis C infection. However, you should consider whether your job might involve the risk of transmitting the disease to others (for example, if your job might involve blood-blood contact, eg medical professions, butchers, etc).

Who can I turn to for help?

A doctor who is specialized in the treatment of hepatitis patients can provide advice and assistance in terms of the decisions lying ahead, and can also advise you on modern treatment options. This kind of specialist doctor and his team have extensive experience in the treatment of hepatitis C infection and will do all they can to support you. Don't be shy about asking questions and expressing your anxieties. There are a large number of hepatitis self-help groups to get in touch with. These are forums where you can share your fears, concerns, experience and successes with other patients.

What can I do?

Accept the challenge. Don't become resigned. Adhere strictly to your doctor's treatment recommendations and take your medication exactly as prescribed. Avail of the information options available, such as this brochure, and inform yourself about your disease. Being well informed will empower you to make more conscious decisions and be strong in battling the virus.



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