



HEPATITIS FOUNDATION  
INTERNATIONAL

**LIVING WITH HEPATITIS C – SELF-HELP TIPS**

Frequently, people learn that they have HCV from a blood test during a routine physical or because they have donated blood. While testing positive is not good news, it is not all doom and gloom or a death sentence. Here are some important things to remember

- **Don't panic.** In most people, the infection does not disappear, so you need to learn to live with it. Think positively. Many people live 20-40 years with the virus without becoming seriously ill or having liver failure.
- **Get regular medical attention.** A physician, who knows about HCV, a gastroenterologist or hepatologist, can watch for signs of trouble, identify problems and keep you informed about new treatments.
- **Avoid contact with blood.** HCV can be transmitted by blood. Cover open cuts and do not share razors, toothbrushes, manicure tools, needles, or anything that might have even the smallest amount of blood on it. Be wary of menstrual blood as well.
- **Protect your liver.** Avoid or seriously restrict alcohol intake. Your liver may be further damaged by alcohol, particularly if taken with acetaminophen, found in Tylenol or other cold and headache remedies. Check with your doctor before using any medications, including over-the-counter drugs or alternative medicines.
- **Be concerned about sexual partners.** While studies have shown the risk of sexual transmission is low between long-term, monogamous couples, people with new or multiple sex partners should use latex condoms. Inform potential partners that you have the virus. In addition, viral levels in the blood can vary widely or rise in response to immunosuppressive drugs, which would make HCV carriers more infectious at certain times. Virus levels increase when certain medications such as corticosteroids or cyclosporine are taken. People with HCV who take these drugs should discuss precautions needed with their doctor.
- **Be informed.** Keep yourself updated on current research, information, and treatment. Be aware of your own health status and what your various options are. Updates on current breakthroughs are reported in HFI's newsletter *HEPATITIS ALERT*.

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