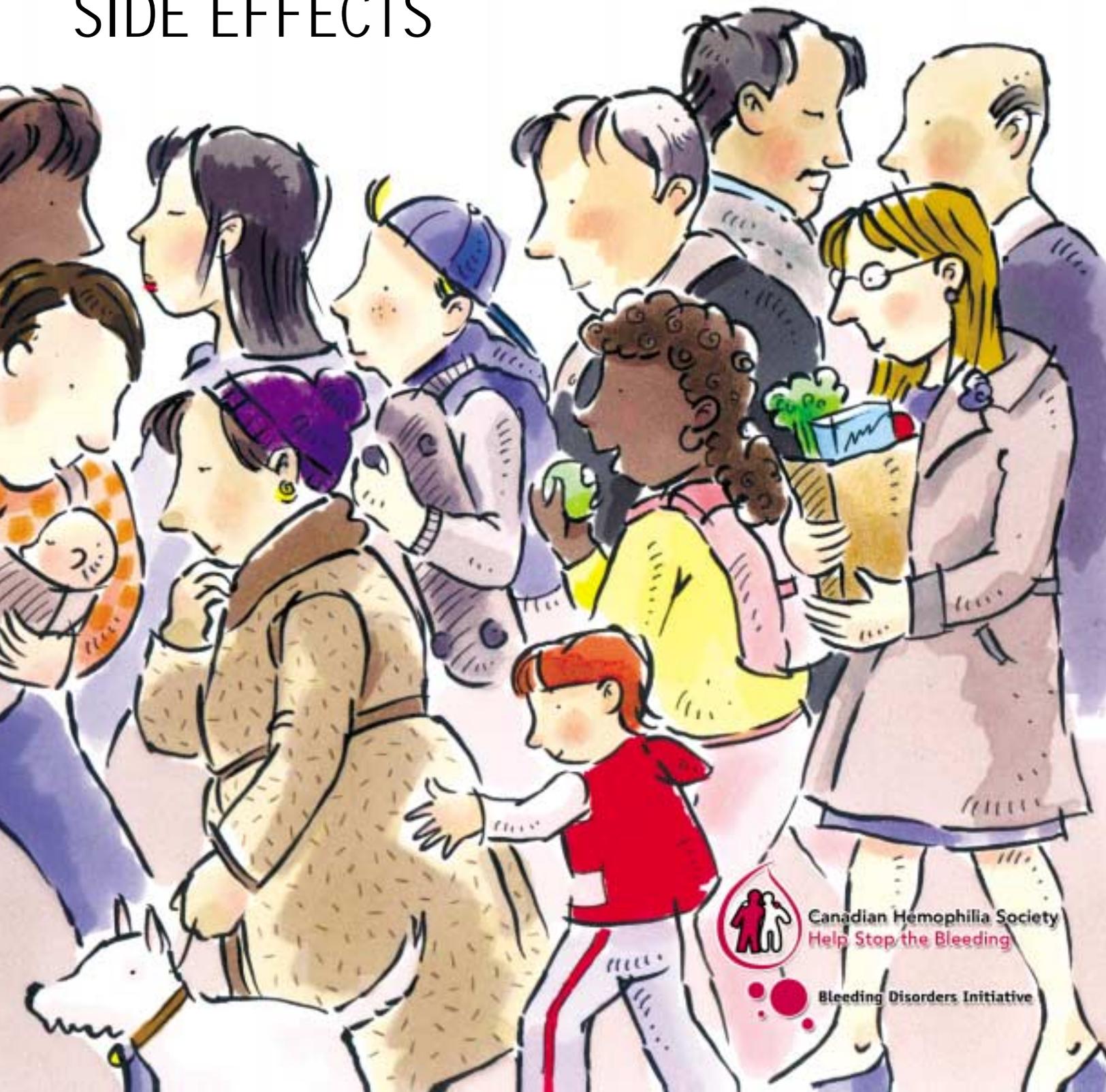


HEPATITIS C:

COMMON DISABLING SYMPTOMS
AND TREATMENT
SIDE EFFECTS



Canadian Hemophilia Society
Help Stop the Bleeding

Bleeding Disorders Initiative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Canadian Hemophilia Society consults qualified medical professionals before distributing any medical information. However, the CHS does not practice medicine and in no circumstances recommends particular treatments for specific individuals. In all cases, the CHS recommends that individuals consult a health care provider before pursuing any course of treatment.

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HEPATITIS C:

COMMON DISABLING SYMPTOMS
AND TREATMENT
SIDE EFFECTS

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The symptoms of the **hepatitis C virus (HCV)** and side-effects from medication used to treat it can make people infected with HCV feel unwell. Some of these symptoms or effects may even be “disabling” in that they are physical or psychological effects that affect daily life. The simple chores of daily living may become hard, and some people may find it difficult to work. This booklet provides information on the common symptoms of HCV and treatment effects.

Readers will also learn where to find more information and support, and what financial assistance may be available.

The information in this booklet comes from:

- People infected with HCV;
- People who provide health care and services to people infected with HCV; and,
- Current health care and medical research.

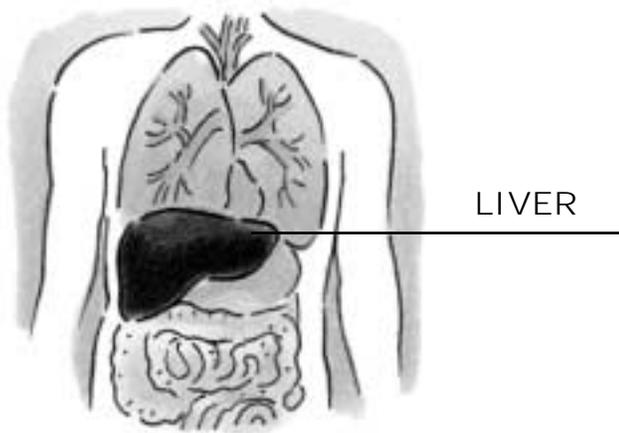
This booklet has information about symptoms of HCV that are commonly reported, and common treatment side effects. The fact that they are described here does not, however, mean a person will experience any, or even some of these symptoms or side effects.



WHAT DOES THE LIVER DO?

The liver is the largest organ in the human body. It is located in the upper right part of the abdomen, just below the diaphragm, underneath the rib cage. One of its jobs is to break down harmful substances absorbed in the body through the digestive tract. The liver also changes digested food into energy the body can use. The liver is important in:

- clotting blood;
- fighting infection;
- removing toxins from the body; and,
- making and storing hormones, sugar (glycogen), minerals, vitamins, fat, bile, and cholesterol, necessary for normal body function.



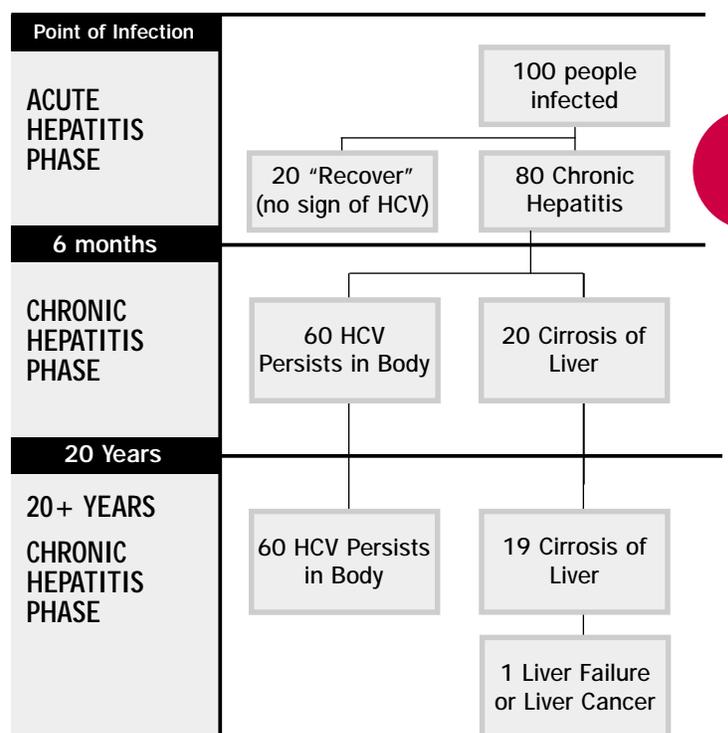
WHAT IS HEPATITIS?

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver from any cause. Hepatitis usually is the result of infection by a virus. There are several types of viruses that can cause hepatitis, named A, B, C, D or E. Hepatitis C is the name for a virus that can cause swelling or inflammation of the liver, and perhaps scarring of this important organ.

WHAT MAY HAPPEN TO SOMEONE INFECTED WITH HCV?

The first phase of HCV infection is called **acute hepatitis C**. For most people, this stage occurs suddenly, but lasts only a few weeks.

If the virus stays in the body for more than six months, the disease is then **chronic hepatitis C**. What happens then can vary. For example, if 100 people are infected with HCV, approximately 20 of them will recover — there will be no sign of HCV in blood tests. As many as 80 of the other people will have chronic hepatitis. HCV may cause healthy liver cells to be replaced by scar tissue — **cirrhosis**, (extensive scarring of the liver, from causes such as hepatitis and other viral infections, medications, alcohol abuse, etc.). Liver failure and even **liver cancer** can occur. After 20 years or more, of the 80 people with chronic hepatitis C, approximately 20 will experience cirrhosis, and of those 20, perhaps one individual will progress to liver cancer or **liver failure**.



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF HCV

- **Fatigue**
- **Stress (adjusting to HCV)**
- **Flu-like symptoms**
- **Right upper side discomfort**

The symptoms of HCV can range from mild to severe. They may be barely noticed, or they may cause problems for the infected person. Symptoms, when they appear at all, usually develop gradually. Because symptoms can appear and disappear, a person may experience periods of both good and poor health. Symptoms during the chronic phase may last several weeks or months at a time. However, rather than coming and going, it is possible that the symptoms could disappear altogether.

A symptom or treatment side effect may differ from person to person in these ways:

- how often it appears (FREQUENCY);
- how much the individual feels it (INTENSITY); and,
- how long it lasts (DURATION).

There are many reasons why people with HCV experience symptoms differently, such as age, general state of health, and the degree of viral infection (**viral load**).

This makes it difficult for people working in health care, government, and the insurance business to agree on a definition for “disabling effect” that clearly reflects the severity of disability experienced by an individual person.

Here are the symptoms commonly experienced by people with HCV.

Fatigue

Many people infected with HCV experience fatigue. Factors that may contribute to fatigue include:

- **pain**– Loss of sleep due to pain or discomfort may cause fatigue. Pain may also sap energy.
- **depression and stress**– Depression and stress may cause a person to feel a lack of energy, or fatigued. (See more information under “Common side effects of treatment”.)
- **being less active**– One may not feel like doing much — even simple tasks require major effort. If a person doesn’t get enough physical activity, however, muscles will weaken and the person will be able to do less over time.
- **overdoing it**– Some people do too much on the days they feel well. They find it hard to pace themselves because they want to keep up with their regular activities or they don’t want others to know they are not well.

People who have fatigue describe having good days and bad days. Sometimes a string of good days will be followed by days of feeling totally “wiped out.” It’s entirely possible for a person with HCV not to feel fatigued; on the other hand, severe fatigue may develop in people whose tests show little or no changes in the liver due to the infection.



For some people fatigue is a daily companion. They may feel fatigued in the morning and completely exhausted before the end of an ordinary workday. This type of fatigue, which isn't linked to over-stressed muscles, is better described by the word **lassitude**. Lassitude means the person feels a complete lack of energy, and may feel tired even after a full night's sleep. This state of chronic weariness may cause a lot of negative changes in life.

Some people experience what may be called "**brain fog**." Brain fog is how people describe being unable to concentrate or being forgetful. It may take them longer to complete a routine task, or they may feel a lack of mental strength needed to finish tasks.

Stress (adjusting to HCV)

Stress can be created when the person with HCV worries about the future.

Why? Having HCV may change a person's outlook on life. The stress of dealing with the losses caused by a chronic illness can make symptoms worse and may even affect the progression of disease. For some people, this emotional strain may be more disabling than the physical effects of the disease.

People living with HCV may experience depression and anger, even without signs of liver inflammation. Others report that they feel more irritable (likely to "fly off the handle") or more moody than usual. These symptoms, sometimes described as "inside your head," may have a more direct link to HCV than is currently known. Researchers are looking for a connection between HCV and "mild" changes to the brain.

Some common stresses are:

- uncertainty about the future and feeling unable to make plans;
- fear of physical or mental deterioration;
- possibility that important health care services may not be available when needed;
- imbalances and tension that may develop in important relationships; and,
- having tests done, including a liver **biopsy**— (obtaining a sample of liver tissue by putting a needle through the skin into the liver) and then waiting for test results.

It must be noted that a person's life situation, even without the HCV infection, may be terribly stressful. Taking care of the basics will likely take priority over symptom management or the threat of poor health in the future. Worry over where to sleep tonight or when the next meal will come is more "real" for some people than a concern for liver damage, with or without symptoms.

Flu-like symptoms

Nausea is one of the most common symptoms of HCV infection. If the nausea leads to severe vomiting, a health care provider should be consulted for help to avoid weight loss, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalance. Muscles may feel sore and joints may ache.

Right upper side discomfort

Some people may feel a dull ache on their right side, just below the rib cage. In fewer cases, an ache or pain may travel up to the right shoulder, or be experienced as a sharp stabbing feeling. This discomfort is believed to be due to swelling of the liver, causing the thick membrane surrounding the liver to stretch.

NON-LIVER HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH HCV

Although HCV generally affects the liver, HCV can affect other organs in the body, too. As the immune system responds to the virus, a number of symptoms may result. The conditions are considered rare, but can occur more frequently in people who have HCV.

Arthritis

Inflammation in joints may cause pain and a feeling of stiffness, perhaps limited range of motion.

Lichen planus

Condition with extremely itchy, wide and flat purple pimples on the forearms, neck and the inside of wrists and thighs. May cause white patches and painful sores in the mouth.

Porphyria cutanea tarda

Fluid-filled blisters on the hands or on any area of the body exposed to sunlight. It is caused when HCV blocks the removal of waste products (**porphyrins**) from the blood.

CONDITIONS OF HCV RELATED TO CIRRHOSIS AND END STAGE LIVER DISEASE

Conditions of HCV related to cirrhosis:

- liver cancer

Conditions of HCV related to end stage liver disease:

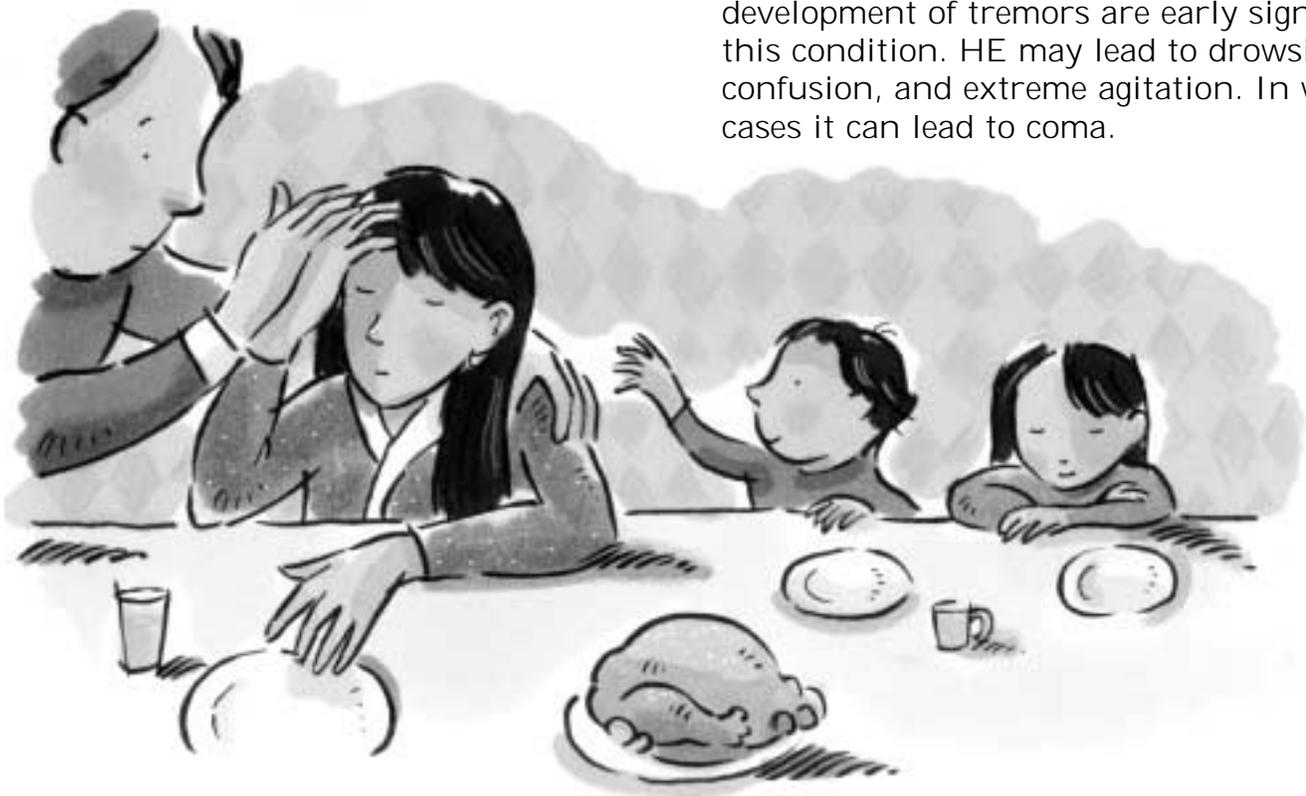
- hepatic encephalopathy
- malnutrition
- ascites
- esophageal varices
- edema
- jaundice
- sleep problems

Liver cancer (hepato-cellular carcinoma or HCC)

Although rare, HCC only occurs when there is cirrhosis of the liver. Your doctor may ask you to undergo screening with an ultrasound and blood tests at certain times.

Hepatic encephalopathy (HE)

HE occurs when the liver is unable to remove toxic waste products from the blood. Changes in sleeping pattern and development of tremors are early signs of this condition. HE may lead to drowsiness, confusion, and extreme agitation. In worst cases it can lead to coma.



Malnutrition

Flu-like symptoms such as nausea and vomiting may affect eating habits.

This in turn can cause weight loss and an inability to eat what is needed to maintain health. Improper absorption of digested food due to cirrhosis of the liver may result in too little (or too much) of one or more vitamins, minerals, or other substances necessary for normal body function. Poor nutrition can also result in the loss of muscle mass.

Ascites

Ascites is the build-up of fluid in the abdomen and is one of the most common of the major complications of cirrhosis.

If abdominal tenderness and fever are present, the cause may be an infection called **spontaneous bacterial peritonitis**.

Esophageal varices

Blood going through a damaged liver may back up into the veins in the stomach and throat (**esophagus**), causing these veins (**varices**) to enlarge. Sometimes varices will bleed, resulting in vomiting of blood and runny, black bowel movements.

Edema

Edema is the build-up of fluid in the tissues of the feet and legs, seen as swelling.

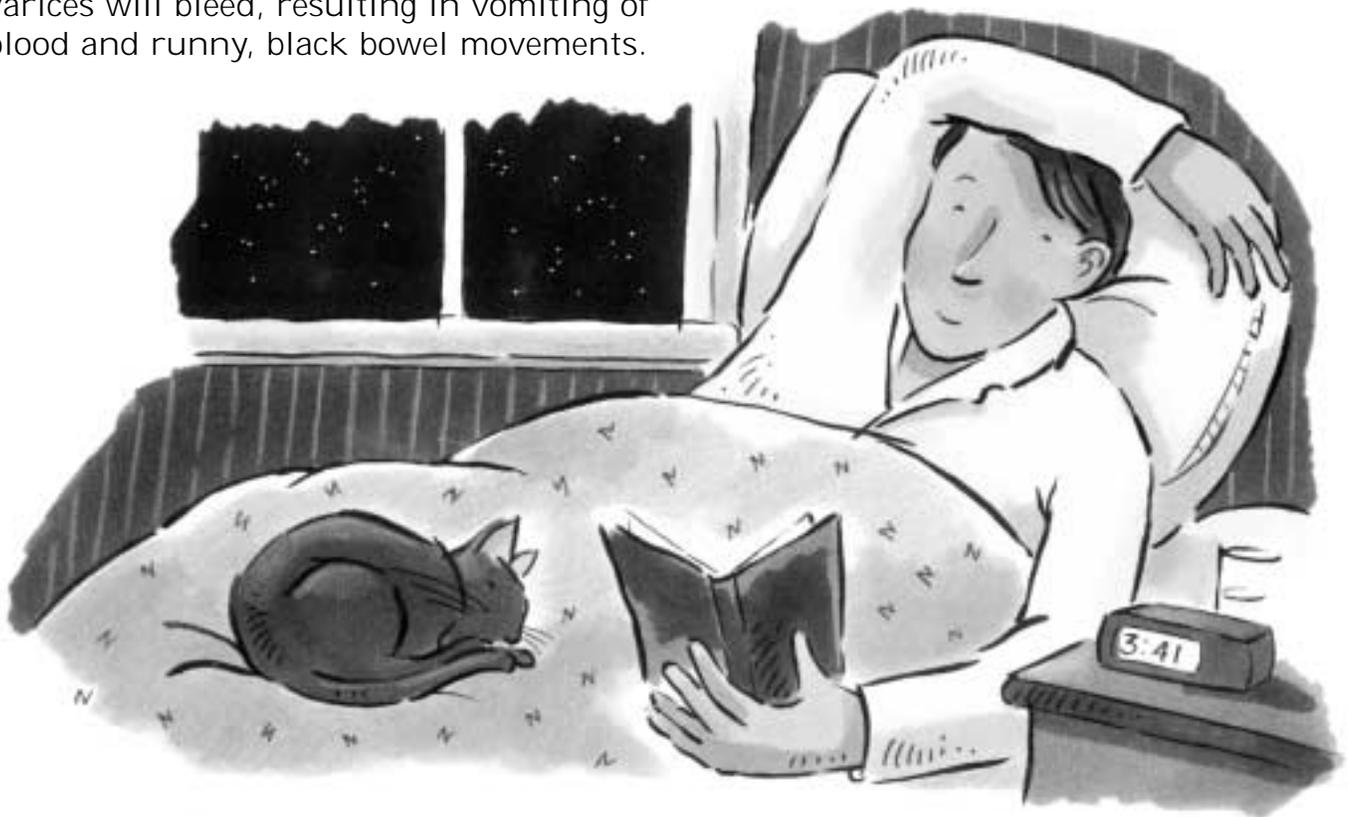
Jaundice

Jaundice is the yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes as a result of a build-up of bile (bilirubin) in the blood. It may contribute to itchy skin.

The itch may either be all over the body or localised to a particular body part. Constant scratching (even when asleep) can damage the skin, particularly if fingernails are long.

Sleep problems

The most common sleep problem is known as day-night reversal, a situation in which one lies awake all night and then sleeps through much of the day. Many people have daytime naps, but find it difficult to stay awake when they want. Sleep is also less refreshing.



COMMON SIDE EFFECTS OF HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

The goal of treatment is to get rid of the hepatitis C virus in the body.

Current treatment for HCV uses a combination of pegylated **interferon** alpha-2a or 2b and **ribavirin**. If HCV cannot be measured in the blood six months after the end of treatment, the patient has reached a **sustained viral response (SVR)**. For the majority of people who achieve a SVR, the virus does not come back and liver damage is stopped or even reversed.

Drug side effects are common and may be very similar to the symptoms of HCV. Not everyone experiences the same side effects from the same treatment. These drugs can sometimes make symptoms of HCV that the individual experienced prior to treatment even worse. A person on treatment may have to take time off work.

EFFECTS THAT MAY OCCUR WITH INTERFERON

Stopping treatment or reducing dosage are the only ways to reduce side effects. Some people taking interferon will have side effects so severe that they will be forced to stop treatment. The following side effects of interferon are most common.

8

Flu-like symptoms

- The first symptom to appear is a fever, and chills often follow.
- Excessive sweating may occur at night during sleep.
- The most severe flu-like symptoms are muscle and joint aches.
- Nausea is common, but the person may just not feel like eating even without nausea. This can lead to weight loss.
- Headaches and diarrhea may occur.

It's important to know that in most cases, flu-like symptoms diminish after two to three weeks of treatment.

Hair loss

Although quite common, any loss of hair is temporary and usually not severe.

Reduced count of white blood cells and platelets

White blood cells protect the body against foreign substances. If there are reduced numbers of white blood cells, the body may be less able to fight off infections. Platelets have a role in stopping bleeding. A drastic reduction in platelets would increase the risk for internal bleeding, but this is rare.

Depression

Depression interferes with the ability to take pleasure in life. The following changes associated with HCV and its treatment may add to a depressed mood:

- loss of ability to get around or follow through with normal daily activities;
- reduced ability to participate in leisure activities such as exercise or sports;
- feeling of struggling with work, or even job loss resulting in loss of income and daily routine;
- changes at home, such as a shift in roles, causing feelings of having lost one's place in the family; and,
- changes to one's hopes and dreams for the future.

People who lead an active lifestyle may be particularly upset by a lack of energy. Intense emotions such as anger and irritability may surface. If a person normally has trouble coping with life's problems, there's an even greater risk for depression because hope is lost more easily, especially if an individual is socially isolated.

Important: Interferon may bring out thoughts of suicide. Everyone should be assessed before and during treatment with interferon. Feeling depressed is the most common reason why people stop taking interferon.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Sometimes depression is hard to recognize because it can sneak up over weeks or months. Problems adjusting to treatment may cause some people to withdraw from family and friends. They may feel that others are ignoring their feelings when they say, "It'll be alright." These words are meant to reassure, but people with HCV may begin to feel nobody understands what they're going through.

When and how to get help

If someone is considering hurting himself/herself or others, professional help should be sought **immediately**. Treatment for depression may also be the answer if usual coping skills aren't working and the depressed mood significantly interferes with life for a couple of weeks or more.

Once the decision to get help is made, here are some ways to find it.

- **A family physician** may suggest a health-related counselling service, make a direct referral to a psychiatrist, or prescribe anti-depressant medication.

- **A trustworthy friend or relative** might recommend his/her counsellor.
- **A local HCV support group** may know a mental health professional who has experience in treating depression and special knowledge about HCV.
- **A local community mental health/social service/family services agency** may offer direct counselling services or be able to refer to an appropriate resource.
- **An employee assistance program** at work may offer counselling services as part of the employees' benefits package. These are completely confidential and do not appear on the employee's record.
- **A professional association or board of registration** for psychologists and social workers will have lists of therapists in private practice.
- **The Yellow Pages™ of the telephone book** and other directories (found in libraries) won't offer much detail, but do provide listings under the headings of Counsellors, Psychologists and Social Workers.

Continued on page 10

The chart below lists clues to depression.

| Physical | Social | Mental | Emotional | Spiritual |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| More or less appetite, or a gain/loss of weight | Withdrawal from friends | Difficulty concentrating and remembering | More crying | Feeling cynical and pessimistic |
| More or less sleep | Increased isolation and loneliness | Loss of interest and pleasure | Feeling guilty or like a failure | Feeling "empty" |
| More fatigue (no energy) | Decreased sex drive | Difficulty making decisions | Feeling easily frustrated | Absence of hope |
| More or less activity | Feeling like no one understands or even cares | Low productivity | Feeling discouraged and helpless | Loss of meaning in life |
| More alcohol, tobacco or drugs | Frequent arguments | Thoughts of death or suicide | Apathy (no motivation) | Less spiritual practice |

Lack of money should not stop someone from finding help. Psychiatrist fees are covered by provincial/territorial health care insurance. Medical social workers and psychologists attached to hospital programs are paid by the health care system. Some counselling services may be covered by an employer's extended health benefits plan. Often counsellors in private practice will charge according to a "sliding fee scale", which means that payments are based on one's ability to pay.

The choice of counsellor may depend on factors such as the counsellor's professional degree (usually a masters or doctorate), depth of experience counselling people living with HCV, or the level of trust and rapport established in the first session or two.

EFFECTS THAT MAY OCCUR WITH RIBAVIRIN

Anemia

Anemia is caused by a drop in the substance (**hemoglobin**) that transports oxygen through the blood to cells. It's the most common side effect of ribavirin. Anemia may cause: shortness of breath during exertion which may make a person feel faint or dizzy; or, a non-productive (dry) cough.

Mouth Ulcers

Ulcers or sores in the mouth may develop at any time during treatment.

Skin Irritation

A skin rash may appear, and may also feel itchy (**pruritus**).

Potential for Birth Defects

Ribavirin can cause deformities in unborn babies.



FINANCIAL OPTIONS

Treatment for hepatitis C may involve costs, especially if a person finds he or she is unable to work. There are various types of assistance available. (See below.) Your health care provider may also be able to provide more information.

PUBLIC disability programs

1. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

- **Employment Insurance (EI)**
 - Eligibility for EI varies among provinces/territories, so check with the local HRDC office for application information.
 - Apply as soon as regular weekly earnings are reduced by 40% because any delay over four (4) weeks will result in a loss of benefits.
 - Sickness benefits are calculated based on the number of hours worked and the level of earnings prior to making a claim. The applicant must have a minimum of 600 insurable work hours, either in the past 52 weeks, or since the last claim.
 - The employer must send in the employee's Record of Employment (ROE) within five (5) days of the last payday, and the employee's doctor must complete a medical certificate.
 - Sickness benefits last for 15 weeks, but there is a two-week unpaid waiting period at the start of the claim.

- **Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Quebec Pension Plan (QPP)**

- CPP/QPP provides for monthly disability pensions for those under 65 years of age.
- If one became disabled after December 31, 1997, the individual must have contributed in four out of the past six years to CPP/QPP. In this time period, he or she must have earned at least 10% of the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE).

The YMPE for 2003 was \$39,000.

- Not all recipients receive the same monthly amount because the benefit is based on an individual's earnings.
- The applicant must provide a detailed medical assessment that supports the fact that:
 - a) the disability is "prolonged," meaning disability will be long term or may result in death; and,
 - b) the disability is "severe," meaning the applicant is unable to work regularly at any job.

CPP/QPP eligibility is based on the inability to work rather than on a specific condition or medical history. The value of the applicant's personal assets or how much monthly income the applicant has from other sources does not affect eligibility. This benefit is not lost if an individual moves to another province, territory or country. Benefits continue even if one becomes involved in a dependent relationship, for example a marriage.

One may have allowable earnings up to 10% of the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE). The money from CPP/QPP is taxable.

CPP/QPP allows a person to return to work for a trial period and still receive the disability benefit for 3 months. If the individual is unable to manage the job at a later date, a re-application to CPP will be 'fast-tracked.'

CPP/QPP pays monthly benefits to dependent children under the age of 18, or between the ages of 18 and 25 and in full time attendance at a recognized school or university.

2. Provincial/territorial social assistance

- Financial assistance for shelter, living expenses and essential medical needs may be available through a local welfare office.
- Eligibility for a disability pension varies among provinces/territories.
- It is likely that medical documents will be required that confirm an inability to work at any full-time job and/or that personal care tasks are difficult.
- If one is already receiving a CPP/QPP pension, it's possible to receive a "top-up" so that one's monthly income will equal the rate of the provincial/territorial disability pension.

PRIVATE sector disability programs

An employed person with HCV may be eligible for an Employee Benefits Package. Check with the employer's personnel department about the availability of sick leave benefits, short-term disability benefits or a disability pension administered through a private insurance company.

Some unions have disability plans that an individual signs up for when joining the Local. Check with the union representative to see about membership in a union benefits plan.

Some private insurance policies include a clause stating that if the policy holder becomes disabled, life insurance premiums will be paid on his/her behalf until age 60 or 65, or until a return to work is made.

Compensation packages

Many people acquired HCV through blood transfusions received in Canada between January 1, 1986 and July 1, 1990. This resulted in a compensation package being negotiated by federal, provincial, and territorial governments to settle class action suits. If the HCV-infected individual transmitted the virus to a partner, spouse, child or other family member, then that person would also qualify for compensation. Compensation is provided at six levels according to a sliding scale based on the severity of the applicant's illness. This includes lump sum payments, loss of income subsidy and repayment of medical expenses.

Several provinces, (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec) also provide compensation to individuals infected in their province with HCV through a blood transfusion prior to 1986 and after 1990.

Individuals infected through blood prior to 1986, or after 1990, may be eligible to receive compensation related to the Plan of Compromise and Arrangement put forth by the Red Cross.

How to apply for disability benefits

Anyone applying for disability benefits has a much better chance of being approved for these benefits if he or she follows carefully the guidelines in the application kit. The application should be easy to read and contain the medical documents that are needed to support the claim. The following process will help increase the chances of success.

1. When symptoms are so severe that working is no longer possible ask health care providers for letters stating this.
2. Contact a work colleague and ask if he/she is willing to write a personal testimony. It should describe how the applicant's physical health worsened over time, until a point was reached where he or she was completely unable to carry out the duties of the job.

3. Have the spouse or a close friend of the applicant write a letter describing any changes observed in physical health, behaviour and general mental attitude.
4. Once all this information is assembled, take it to the liver specialist. The specialist's comments are absolutely essential because they will be looked at very closely. The specialist should also submit all test results, such as liver biopsy and blood tests, as medical proof that the symptoms are so severe that the applicant is unable to function in ANY type of work.
5. Ask the specialist to mail the package, with his/her comments on top.
6. Every time a visit is made to a health care provider, the patient should fully describe all symptoms, particularly any problems with fatigue, depression, anxiety, or stress. The health care provider's notes on file will become official medical proof that the patient's ability to work is impaired.
7. The person should be off work at the time a claim is filed.

An appeal can be filed if the application is denied. A lawyer or a community advocate that specializes in HCV or income assistance cases may be helpful. Act quickly because there will only be a limited number of days (90 days for a CPP/QPP appeal) from receipt of the letter denying the claim to notify the government or insurance company of an intent to appeal its decision.



Paying for cost of treatment

The cost of treatment with interferon and ribavirin depends on the patient's weight (and therefore dosage). At 2004 prices, monthly costs range from \$1,600 to \$2,300. Treatment usually lasts 24 to 48 weeks. A health care provider should be consulted for more detailed information so that any issues around expenses are resolved before treatment is started.

• Provincial/territorial plans

The provincial or territorial government may either cover the entire cost of treatment or expect the patient to pay a deductible, depending on the patient's financial situation.

• Private extended health benefit plans

The patient's health insurance company will likely pay a portion of treatment expenses.

• 86-90 Hepatitis C Claim Centre

Those who qualify as an HCV infected member of one of the class action suits may be entitled to receive reimbursement for uninsured HCV medication costs.

• The Canadian Advisory Reimbursement Exchange – C.A.R.E.

C.A.R.E. is a reimbursement program for patients who are prescribed hepatitis C medication but who may have financial difficulty paying for the medication (if they do not have a drug insurance plan), or have difficulty paying the co-payment portion if they have a drug insurance plan. Contact them at 1-800-603-2754, extension 2121.

• Special government authority

The provincial or territorial government may have a policy provision that helps cover medication costs if the patient's doctor believes that it is the only drug that will work, and that all comparable drugs covered by the government health plan have failed. The doctor will be required to complete the appropriate form.

• Compassionate grounds

The pharmaceutical company that markets the drug in question may be approached on compassionate grounds. A supportive letter from the patient's health care provider may be necessary.

HOW TO FIND HELPFUL HEALTH INFORMATION

Following a diagnosis of HCV, people often want to find out what they can do to avoid or reduce the risk of developing health problems. If health problems already exist, they may want to learn how to manage these problems better, and maintain, or improve health.

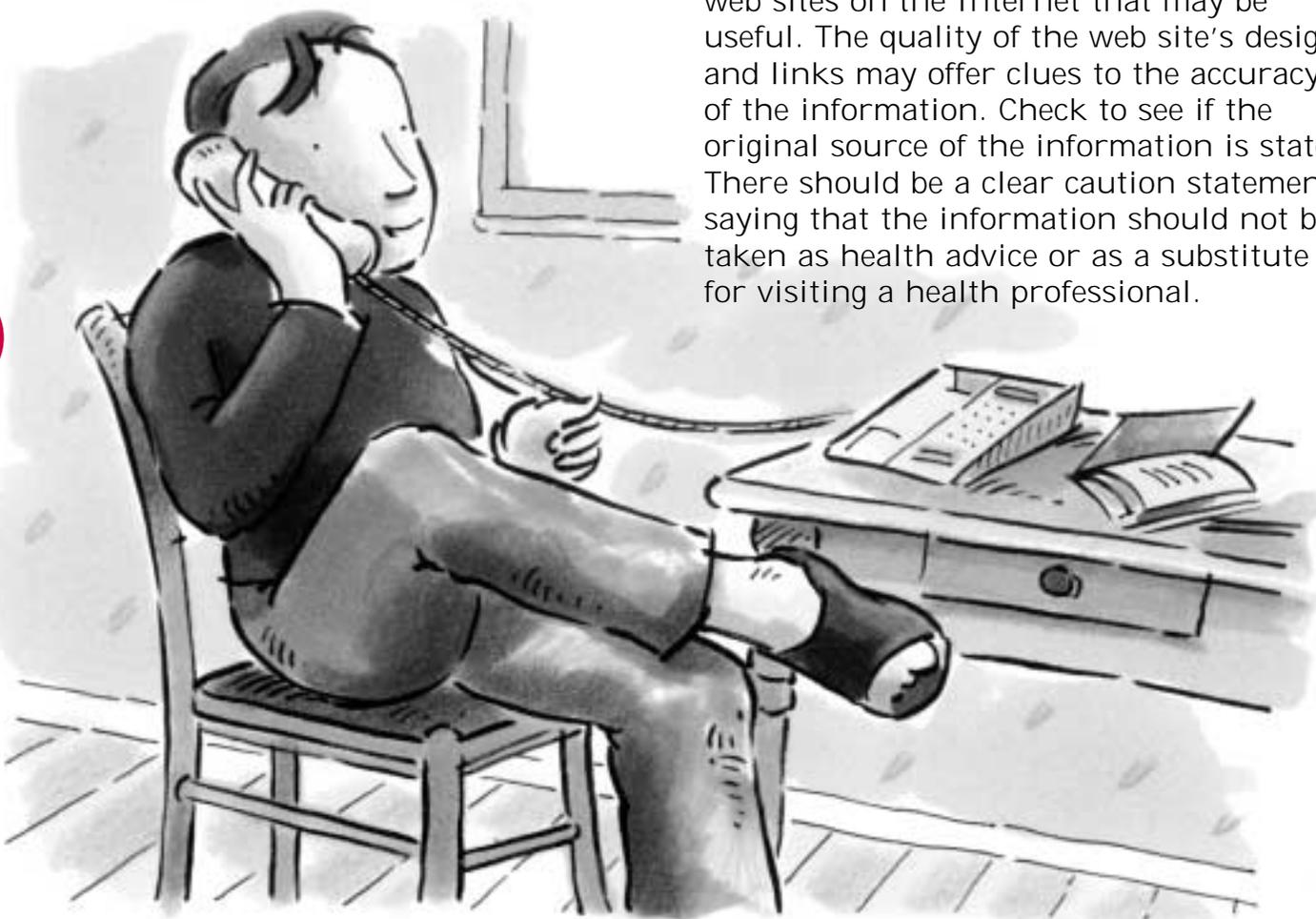
There are organizations with local offices that can be helpful, such as the Canadian Liver Foundation, for example. Here are some tips when telephoning an organization for more information.

- Write down important questions ahead of time so they are not forgotten.
- Try to be clear when explaining the situation so a specific answer will be given.
- Ask for an explanation if the answer doesn't make sense.

- If the organization has a service that sounds like it may be useful, ask if there is a fee or if a doctor's referral is needed.
- If the person says he or she can't help, ask for a referral to someone who can.

Books can help an individual understand HCV better. Just reading about people who are experiencing similar problems can be reassuring. Authors, however, sometimes try to prove their point of view by giving data that best argues their case. See what evidence is provided to support a specific treatment or service. Is the content detailed or vague? Is the author an expert on the subject? A health care provider, or someone else whose judgement is trustworthy may know of a good book.

Look for the most current information available in other formats because our knowledge about hepatitis C and its treatment is changing fast. There are many web sites on the Internet that may be useful. The quality of the web site's design and links may offer clues to the accuracy of the information. Check to see if the original source of the information is stated. There should be a clear caution statement saying that the information should not be taken as health advice or as a substitute for visiting a health professional.



CONTACT INFORMATION

HEPATITIS C



- Your health care provider
- Canadian Hemophilia Society (CHS) at 1-800-668-2686 or www.hemophilia.ca
- Canadian Liver Foundation (CLF) at 1-800-563-5483 or www.liver.ca
- Health Canada
www.healthcanada.ca/hepc

FINANCES

- If you or somebody you know might qualify for the compensation package negotiated for people who acquired HCV through the Canadian blood supply, contact the Hepatitis C Claims Centre at 1-877-434-0944 or www.hepc8690.ca
- For more information on compensation through the Red Cross, contact KPMG Inc. toll-free at 1-888-840-5764 or www.kpmg.ca/microsite/hepatitisc/english/
- For more information about Employment Insurance (EI), look under the Government of Canada – Human Resources Development Canada in your phone book, or visit www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ei
- To find out more about the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), contact Income Security Programs at 1-800-277-9914, or visit www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/isp
- For more information about disability benefits and the Quebec Pension Plan, contact Régie des Rentes (in French and English) www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/an/invalidite
- For more information about programs and services for disabled people in Quebec, contact Office des Personnes Handicapées (in French) www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca

