



Taking charge of your hepatitis C

United
Healthcare®
Community Plan





You can take charge of your hepatitis C

If you have hepatitis C, you may have questions. What kind of treatments are needed? Is there a vaccine? Can I pass it on to others? What can I do to stay as healthy as possible?

The following information, combined with help from your doctor, can help answer the above questions and more.

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). There are two types:

Acute hepatitis C is a short-term infection. Symptoms can last up to six months. The body is able to fight off the infection in about 15-25% of people and the virus goes away.

Chronic hepatitis is a lifelong illness if not treated. It occurs when your body can't fight off the virus on its own. 75-85% of people with hepatitis C will develop a chronic infection. Early diagnosis and treatment is needed to prevent liver damage. Chronic hepatitis C infection is the main reason for liver transplants. It's also the leading cause of end-stage liver disease, liver-related death and liver cancer.

There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. But with the help of treatment and healthy habits, you can manage it.



Symptoms of hepatitis C

Acute hepatitis C

People with acute hepatitis C usually don't have symptoms, but if they do, they're mild. These symptoms can include:

- Fever.
- Fatigue.
- Dark-colored urine.
- Clay-colored bowel movements.
- Nausea.
- Joint pain.
- Jaundice (yellow color in the skin or eyes).

Chronic hepatitis C

Like an acute infection, most people with chronic hepatitis C don't have any symptoms. If a person does, they're usually common symptoms, such as chronic fatigue and depression. Many people will eventually develop chronic liver disease. This can range from mild to severe. It may also lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. Chronic hepatitis C is often not found until people have their blood screened at a routine exam or when donating blood.



Did you know?

- An estimated 2.7-3.9 million people have chronic hepatitis C in the U.S.¹
- Most people infected with hepatitis C do not have any symptoms.

¹The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Accessed September 5, 2018.

How hepatitis C spreads

The hepatitis C virus spreads when blood from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected.

A person cannot get it from an infected person by:

- Sharing eating utensils.
- Hugging.
- Shaking or holding hands.
- Being cough or sneezed on.

It is also not spread through:

- Food.
- Water.
- Mosquito or other bug bites.

People can become infected with the hepatitis C virus by:

- Sharing needles, syringes or other items to inject drugs.
- Getting stuck with a needle used on an infected person.
- Being born to a mother who has hepatitis C.
- Having a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992.
- Using an infected person's personal care items that may have come in contact with their blood, such as a razor, toothbrush.
- Having unprotected sex with an infected person.
- Being tattooed or pierced with tools used on an infected person that were not properly sterilized.



Work with your doctor(s)

When working with any doctor, it's important to work as a team. Tell your doctor about how you're feeling. Listen carefully and ask questions. The more you work together, the better your doctor will be able to treat your hepatitis C.

Be prepared for your doctor visit

- Bring a list of everything you take.
 - Prescription medicines.
 - Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines.
 - Supplements or herbs.
 - Vitamins.
- Bring a list of your questions for the doctor. Not sure what to ask? Look at the list on page 5 of this booklet to get you started.
- Be sure your doctor:
 - Makes time for your questions.
 - Listens to you.

Depending on what you need care for, there are a few different types of doctors you may see.

1

Primary care doctor

You see this doctor for all types of health concerns. They often can help you manage your hepatitis C, too. If you don't have a primary doctor, call Member Services at the number listed on the back of your ID card. You can also find one by visiting myuhc.com/CommunityPlan and using the Find-a-Doctor tool.

2

Liver doctor (gastroenterologist or hepatologist)

These are specialists. You may be referred to one of these doctors, if needed. It will depend on how your hepatitis C is doing.

Be sure to check your benefit plan for specific coverage details.



It's important to choose the right doctor. Pick one that listens to you and helps you take steps to stay healthy. Make sure they have a plan to treat your hepatitis C.



Ask your doctor

Bring a list of questions to your next doctor visit. The following questions can help you get started.

- Are there any tests I need to take at this time?
- Are there any medications that may help me right now?
- Is it safe to have sex?
- What can I do to prevent the disease from getting worse?
- How can I avoid spreading hepatitis C to others?
- Should I be vaccinated against other types of hepatitis?



Treatment

People with hepatitis C infection should be watched by their doctors. If the virus does not go away on its own, it can be treated with antiviral medicines. The medicines attack the virus and in most cases, can cure the disease.

There have been advances in the treatment of hepatitis C with the introduction of new medicines or treatments. Your doctor will determine which medicine you should take and for how long. Treatments can last from eight to 24 weeks.

Some of the factors considered include:

- Your HCV genotype – this is the form of hepatitis C that you have.
- How much liver damage you have.
- If you’ve been treated before and the medicines used.
- Other health conditions you may have.



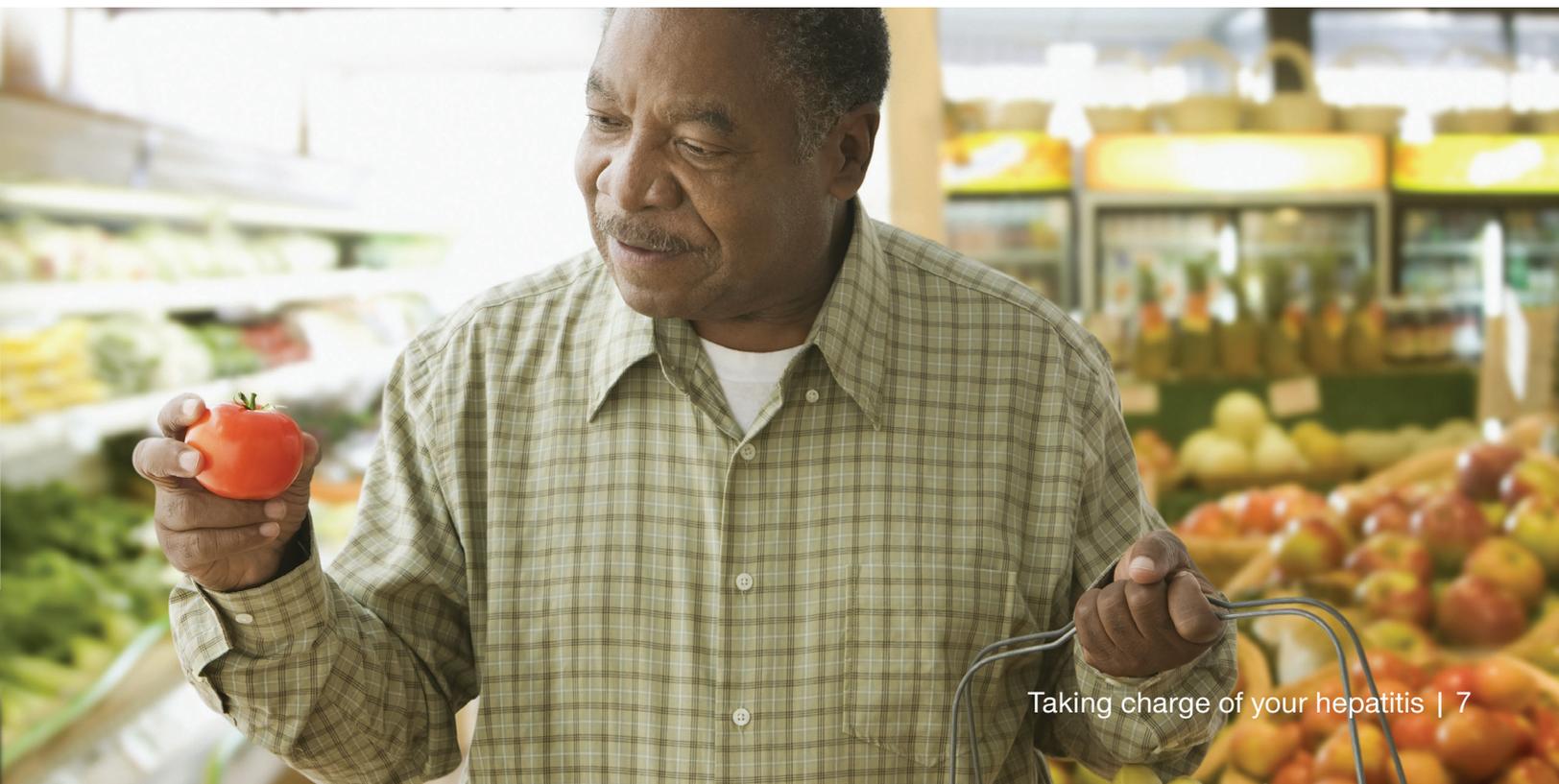
Your primary care provider (PCP) can answer questions and provide nutritional guidelines. It’s important to meet with your PCP during and after your treatment so they can watch for complications.

Stay healthy and avoid risks

While your body is fighting the hepatitis C infection, it's important to rest, drink plenty of fluids and eat a healthy diet. A good diet can improve the health of your liver. It can also reduce some of the symptoms you may have, like feeling tired or sick.

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Eat from all five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy).
- Eat fewer sugary foods. For example, cookies, candies and sweetened drinks.
- Don't drink alcohol. Alcohol is unsafe for the liver, even in people without hepatitis C. You should avoid alcohol completely before and during hepatitis C treatment.
- Watch where the fat in your meals comes from.
 - Most fat should come from fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
 - Stay away from foods that are high in solid fats. For example, ice cream, pizza, bacon and hot dogs.
- Get enough protein. Drink protein drinks if necessary.
- Drink fluids, about 6 to 8 glasses every day.
 - Don't let yourself get thirsty.
 - Talk to your doctor about drinking herbal tea. Some teas may be bad for your liver or interact with your medicines.
 - Some good sources of fluids are: water, 100% fruit juice, low-sodium soup or broth and low- or nonfat milk.





Helpful resources

Centers for Disease Control

[CDC.gov/Hepatitis/HCV/](https://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/HCV/)

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan

Our public website. Find a health plan. See benefits. Find care providers.

UHCCommunityPlan.com

Our member website. View covered benefits. Find care providers.

View your member ID card.

myuhc.com/CommunityPlan

Important contacts

Doctor's name: _____ Phone: _____

Doctor's name: _____ Phone: _____

Doctor's name: _____ Phone: _____

Pharmacy: _____ Phone: _____

Urgent Care: _____ Phone: _____

Hospital: _____ Phone: _____

If there's an emergency, call 911.



