

What to Expect Before, During, and After Treatment for Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

Before Starting Treatment

Your liver disease and overall health will be evaluated by the liver team, including:

- ▶ HCV genotype, viral load and prior HCV treatments
- ▶ Severity of scarring (fibrosis) in your liver
- ▶ Other medical history
- ▶ Current medications to assess for drug interactions
- ▶ Difficulties with housing or transportation
- ▶ Compliance with taking your medications, completing tests, and coming to visits

Prescription for Treatment

- ▶ The liver team will determine which HCV treatment is right for you. Treatment in most patients is short (8-12 weeks) but can be longer (16 or 24 weeks) for some patients.

During Treatment

- ▶ Keep all medical and laboratory appointments. Virtual or telephone appointments may be available for some appointments.
- ▶ Take your medication(s) every day as prescribed. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as possible.
- ▶ Refill your medications on time.
- ▶ Let your provider know if you have:
 - health changes
 - medication changes
 - been taking or are considering taking over-the-counter products

- lost your medications
- travel out of town
- changes to your phone number or address
- missed multiple doses of your HCV medication(s)

- ▶ Avoid alcohol and street drugs

How to Track Treatment Response

Use the chart to track your treatment response and monitor for side effects.

- ▶ **HCV RNA (Viral Load):** This is a measure of the amount of hepatitis C virus in the blood. In most cases, the viral load becomes “undetectable” or extremely low within 4 weeks of treatment – this is very good.
- ▶ **Alanine aminotransferase (ALT):** This liver enzyme can be elevated with hepatitis C infection. Treatment of your hepatitis C can help normalize your ALT.
- ▶ **Hemoglobin (Hgb):** If your treatment includes ribavirin, hemoglobin is important to monitor. Ribavirin can reduce red blood cells and cause fatigue.
- ▶ **Side Effects are usually very tolerable.** Your provider will tell you what to expect depending on the treatment that is prescribed for you. You can track bothersome side effects in the chart and share them with your provider.

After Treatment

Your provider will let you know if continued follow-up with a liver provider is needed. Most patients will no longer need to be seen by a liver provider after their HCV is cured. If you have cirrhosis (significant scarring), long term monitoring is needed to screen for liver cancer and other complications of cirrhosis.



Tips for Success

- ▶ Don't miss appointments. If you can't make an appointment, call the phone number listed to reschedule clinic or lab visits.
- ▶ Save the VA clinic phone number in your phone.
- ▶ Set reminders in your smart phone to:
 - take your medications
 - avoid missing clinic, phone or lab appointments
 - take a picture of your medication list for future appointments

Cut and save your future appointments in your wallet.
Or take a picture of your appointments with your phone.

Future Appointments

Provider: _____

Phone: _____

NEXT APPOINTMENTS

Date: _____ ☐ Lab ☐ Clinic/VVC/Telephone

Date: _____ ☐ Lab ☐ Clinic/VVC/Telephone

Optional Treatment Tracking Chart

Name: _____ Treatment Start Date: _____ Treatment Duration: _____

- ▶ A blood test may be ordered during treatment and/or at the end of treatment.
- ▶ A blood test is always done at least 12 weeks after completing treatment to see if you are cured.

	Baseline Values	Week ____	Week ____	Week ____	End of Treatment	12 Weeks After Treatment (Cure Date)
Date						
HCV RNA (viral load)						
ALT Liver Enzyme						
Hgb (if on ribavirin)						
Side Effects						
Missed Doses (#)						

For more information, visit www.hepatitis.va.gov