



May 2010

6. Hepatitis C: Taking Care of Yourself

Education + Resource Centre (ERC)

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Monday–Thursday
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A good way to look after your liver is to maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet.

Stress management

What does stress management have to offer?

Some people with hepatitis C find that stress management improves their sense of wellbeing. It can help you to feel

- calmer
- more in control of your life
- more comfortable physically and mentally

These are some examples of techniques to manage stress:

- relaxation
- meditation
- exercise
- healthy eating
- acupuncture
- taking up a hobby, such as gardening, or getting a pet
- massage

How do you find out more information about stress management?

- There are many classes offered in the community
- Check with the community centres in your area and look in the local newspaper
- Occupational therapy departments in hospitals often run courses and can give advice
- Consult a dietitian or naturopath for help with your diet
- The Access Information Centre has books and audiotapes on the subject and also keeps details of some courses in the community
- Talk to a counselor



Diet and alcohol

This includes eating a balanced diet - one that is:

high in fruit and vegetables, breads and cereals

moderate in meat and dairy products

low in fats and sugars

It is a good idea to keep your water intake up and your caffeine intake (i.e.: coffee, tea, coca cola and chocolate) down.

Heavy alcohol consumption can lead to an increase in your liver damage.

It is recommended that you **have no more than 1-2 standard drinks per day** (no more than 7 drinks per week) and that you have **at least 3 alcohol free days each week**. Medical specialists recommend that people with cirrhosis or significant liver scarring avoid alcohol completely, while people with mild or no scarring may be able to drink alcohol in moderation. Talk to your doctor about this.

If you need some strategies to reduce your alcohol intake, talk to a doctor or counsellor.

Illicit drugs, your health and hepatitis C

Nearly all drugs are processed through the liver, whether they are prescription or recreational. Some drugs are more dangerous to the liver than others.

Having hepatitis C may make you more likely to experience liver problems, so it is important to take this into account when you are using drugs. Opiates like heroin and morphine are not thought to be harmful to the liver on their own, but liver damage might occur through the substances they are cut (mixed) with. Some party drugs, such as ecstasy and cocaine, can affect the way the liver works and cause liver failure. Speed and other amphetamines may also damage the liver. It is important to discuss with your doctor that you are using drugs.

If you continue using drugs, what strategies can you follow to reduce harm?

- Filter drugs well when injecting
- Use clean water and sterile equipment
- Eat good food regularly
- Make sure you get enough sleep

For more information about harm reduction strategies, such as filtering drugs, contact VIVAIDS ph: 9419 3633

To find more about drug use:

call Directline ph: 1800 888 236

or go to the Australian Drug Foundation web site www.adf.org.au

More information is also available at

Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) for a Drug & Alcohol Services directory including Needle Syringe Program

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A free and confidential service for people seeking information about HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections (STIs)

(for a listing, go to the **Drug Services directory** at <http://www.vicdrugguide.org.au/services/services.php> type NSP in the Service Name box and put your postcode in, then search)

- VIVAIDS (ph: 9419 3633) or local community health centres.

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Special thanks to the Focus Group, the group of people with hepatitis C who gave generously of their time, energy and experience to help develop this information sheet.

Produced by

Education + Resource Centre (HIV, Hepatitis, STIs), March 2003 Reviewed Dec 2008

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