

a series of fact sheets written
by experts in the field of liver
disease

Side Effect Management

Weight Loss

Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

Severe weight loss can be a very serious problem for someone on hepatitis C treatment. Proper nutrition from a healthy diet is important for maintaining overall good health while on treatment. The majority of people on HCV medical therapy report mild to moderate weight loss. Unfortunately, the weight loss associated with HCV therapy may be a combination of regular weight loss and a reduction in body muscle mass. For this reason, it is important that foods and fluids be treated as medicine since they are necessary for maintaining good health. Exercise is also important since it will increase muscle mass, stimulate the appetite, help keep the immune system strong, and help combat depression and anxiety. It is important to know that weight loss can be caused by many factors including taste changes, nausea, upset stomach, vomiting, depression and other issues that should be evaluated by a medical provider.

In order to maintain proper weight control on treatment it is important that patients take the necessary steps to eat well and stay healthy while on HCV therapy.

There are many strategies that people can use to help with weight loss:

- Consult with a dietician or nutritionist for information on food choices
- Choose foods that are high in calories and protein
- Drink clear juices in addition to water for extra calories
- Add ingredients to increase nutritional value:
 - ◆ Add powdered milk to regular milk, milkshakes, casseroles, soups, eggs, mashed potatoes, hot cereal, and puddings
 - ◆ Spread peanut butter on bread, tortillas, waffles, pancakes, and fruit
 - ◆ Add cooked beans or hard boiled eggs to soups, casseroles, and pasta that already contain cheese and meat
- Try products designed to promote weight gain, such as nutritional supplements, canned formulas, instant breakfast powers, high-calorie puddings, etc.

If you have a severe weight loss (5 lbs or more in a week), shortness of breath or dizziness, consult with a medical provider immediately.

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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