I Was Diagnosed With Hepatitis C (HCV). Now What?

When you are told that you have HCV, it can be scary. You might feel sad, ashamed, or alone. These feelings are normal. But remember: you are not alone, and there is a cure. Millions of people have HCV, and more and more people are being cured every day.

After you are diagnosed, it is important to work with a healthcare professional who has experience in treating patients with HCV. He or she will run some more blood tests to learn about your HCV. These blood tests can help your healthcare professional decide:

- If your liver has any damage. To learn more, you might also get pictures taken of your liver and a physical exam.
- If you should be tested for HIV. HIV and HCV can be shared in the same way, so sometimes people have both.
- If you need a hepatitis A or B vaccine.
- If you need to have any more tests.

How Will My HCV Be Treated?

There have been a lot of changes in the way HCV is treated. It’s much different today than it was in the past.

- New medicines can cure HCV almost all of the time.
- A medicine called interferon is no longer used for HCV. Interferon had many side effects, had to be taken for a long time, and sometimes didn’t work.
- Most people will take medicines for about 2-3 months. During this time, it’s very important to go to all the appointments that you schedule with your healthcare professional.
- Being “cured” means that the HCV is no longer in your body 3 months after you are finished with your medicines.
- If your liver is damaged or if you have other infections, you might need to get more treatment or more testing for liver cancer after you are cured.
Health Insurance and Costs

Getting treatment for HCV can sometimes be a long process. Getting access to HCV medicines may depend on your health insurance.

- The new medicines that are available might need approval, sometimes called “prior authorization,” from your health insurance company.
- Your healthcare professional might need to ask you questions about your insurance. This will help him or her find out what medicines your insurance will cover.
- Your insurance might require you to use a special pharmacy that you may not have used before.
- If you can’t afford your medicines, there may be programs to help you.
- Talk with your healthcare professional about options available to you.

Bottom Line

- HCV can be cured. The medicines available today can cure over 95% of HCV cases.
- Treatment includes taking medicines for 2-3 months in most cases. Going to all of your scheduled healthcare appointments and keeping a healthy lifestyle is important.
- Getting access to treatment can sometimes be a long process. Talk with your healthcare professional about your health insurance and coverage options.

Questions for My Doctor

- Do I need any additional tests?
- Will my insurance cover HCV treatment?
- Are there programs that can help pay for my HCV treatment?
- Which medicines are right for me? How do I need to take them (time of day, with or without food)?
- Will the HCV medicines interact with any of the medicines I’m currently taking?
- Are there any side effects from taking these medicines?
- How will I know when I am cured?

For More Information