

Hepatitis C: The Basics

The hepatitis C virus uses both acute and chronic liver infections. Acute HCV infection is usually asymptomatic. Most people (75-85%) infected with HCV will go on to develop chronic hepatitis C. Chronic HCV is a long-term infection that left untreated may eventually lead to cirrhosis or hepatic carcinoma. Up to 3.2 million people in the United States are infected with HCV, and most do not realize that they are infected owing to the lack of symptoms. People who do not know their HCV status may infect others with the virus without knowing it.

Treating Chronic Hepatitis C Infection

There is good news for people living with chronic HCV infections. Several changes in the standards of practice for the treatment of HCV took place in 2014 with the approval of new oral drugs. One of the oral drugs to recently receive FDA approval (on October 10, 2014) for the treatment of HCV is a combination of ledipasvir and sofosbuvir known as Harvoni™. This combination product is the first of its kind for the treatment of HCV genotype 1. One of the major advantages of this drug is that it does not require co-administration with interferon or ribavirin. Such products are simplifying treatment plans and increasing the potential for patients to achieve long-term SVR (sustain viral response) and be cured. With the addition of new HCV treatments, it is possible for more patients to receive the treatment they need. Although other barriers to treatment exist, medication safety and efficacy are becoming less of an issue than in the past. If research and innovative treatments continue to emerge, barriers to HCV treatment will continue to disappear. Hopefully, in the near future, all patients with HCV can be treated safely and effectively. (versus 24 weeks).

Hepatitis Fast Facts

- Hepatitis is the 8th leading cause of death worldwide.
- The prevalence of hepatitis is higher than HIV or any cancer.
- Less than one third of world governments report funding action to reduce the stigmatization or discrimination against people living with hepatitis B or C.
- In 2010 hepatitis led to the deaths of 1.4 million people.
- Approximately every 10 seconds a person contracts hepatitis.
- 2.7% of global deaths are due to diseases related to hepatitis B and C infection.
- 400 million people around the world are currently infected with chronic hepatitis.

Education vs. Counseling: Education is Not Enough

Education	Counseling
Can increase knowledge, but does not effect emotional relationship to new information.	Increases person's 'felt understanding' including perceived seriousness and perceived susceptibility (or risk of) condition
Purely cognitive intervention.	Acknowledges feelings, attitudes, values, and beliefs.
Usually one-directional: educator provides information to client.	A dialogue between client and provider that includes the client providing information on feelings, behaviors, and relationships.

Behavior Change Is Determined By "Felt Understanding"

1. Perceived seriousness (or severity, consequences) of condition.
2. Perceived susceptibility to (or risk of) condition.
3. Knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about condition.
4. Perceived and actual social norms related to the behavior (influence of peers, family, cultural and religious norms).
5. Belief in one's ability to carry out a specific behavior.
6. Skills required for implementing the behavioral change.
7. Understanding of barriers and facilitators to intended change.
8. Perceived and actual cost (financial or personal).
9. Access to services or support.
10. Power dynamics within relationships, including distribution of power between partners.