

## The Spirit

It is often difficult to stay connected to a belief system when you are suffering from a chronic illness like HCV. The body and mind can play an important part in staying connected to your beliefs. When you are feeling physically and mentally restricted it may be more difficult to find the energy you need. Some days it is as simple as putting one foot in front of the other and getting into action.

Here are some suggestions:

- **Keep a positive self-concept and sense of purpose**

Try volunteering for a worthy cause. Join in activities with your children, family or friends. Set aside a day just for you.

- **Take part in uplifting activities**

The arts, spiritual movies, volunteering when able and other similar activities all serve to lift your spirits and keep you focused on the positive aspects of life.

- **Seek strength from your beliefs and take part in spiritual activities**

Go to church, recovery meetings, support groups, read spiritual books and engage with others.



All these activities will serve to take you out of yourself and to focus on others and how you may be of service to them. This gives us a sense of purpose, lifts our self confidence and helps us to feel good about who and where we are in life.

## Additional Information

This **Six Pamphlet Series**, along with the accompanying **Resource Directory**, is designed to provide you with a support network of resources within your community, a better understanding of Hepatitis C and how to prevent its spread, treatment options available and how to take control of your life through healthy lifestyle choices.

- **See** the Manitoba Hepatitis C Resource Directory for a glossary of terms and definitions and HCV resource contacts within the community.
- **Read** the entire **Six Pamphlet Series on Hepatitis C**: Hepatitis C - The Basic Facts, Hepatitis C and Your Liver, Hepatitis C - Infection and Prevention, Treatment Options for Hepatitis C, Healthy Living With Hepatitis C and Psychosocial Aspects of Hepatitis C.
- **Contact** the Manitoba Hepatitis C Support Community by telephone at: 779-6464, email: [info@mbhepc.org](mailto:info@mbhepc.org) or through our website: [www.mbhepc.org](http://www.mbhepc.org)

# Hepatitis C

## Healthy Living

Pamphlet # **5**  
in a 6 Pamphlet Series  
On Hepatitis C

- **The Body**

- **The Mind**

- **The Spirit**



# Healthy Living with Hepatitis C

Living well is not a cure, but more a means of managing HCV. It is important to ask questions, read and find out what community resources are available to you and your family. Your decisions and actions are the most important when it comes to keeping your HCV under control. Your attitudes and behaviors will have a direct effect on your physical, mental and spiritual well being.

**The key areas to focus on are:**

## The Body

Nourish your body and be constantly aware of the food you eat and what you are putting into your body. Remember that everything you eat, breathe and absorb through your skin is processed by the liver. It is important not to place additional stress and further damage on the liver by ingesting (eating) unhealthy foods and absorbing or breathing toxic (poisonous) substances.

- **Avoid alcohol** – Research indicates that regular alcohol use allows the virus to grow more rapidly in the liver and in the blood. Therefore, regular use of alcohol is potentially harmful to the liver and should be avoided.
- **Avoid using illegal drugs and smoking** – Drugs like acetaminophen (Tylenol), may be harmful if taken in excess. Large doses have been known to cause liver failure. Illegal drugs have no regulation as to the amount of the active ingredient and may cause harm to the liver.
- **Avoid taking medications when it's not necessary** – A good rule of thumb is to have your liver blood tests checked after starting any new medications. Because your liver's ability to filter toxins may be impaired (damaged).

Medications such as sleeping pills could cause you to become drowsy and confused.

- **Avoid chemicals especially aerosols; these are toxic to the liver** – Wear rubber gloves, protective clothing, or a mask when handling cleaning solutions, solvents, pesticides and aerosols at home or at work.
- **Exercise regularly** – Exercise will keep you physically and emotionally healthy. However, it is suggested that you check with your physician prior to beginning any exercise program.
- **Don't overdo it on "good days" and do nothing on "bad days".**
- **Eat a balanced diet** – It is proven that you are what you eat. A balanced diet may actually help the liver to regenerate new cells. Consult a dietician, or read the Canada Food Guide.
- **Consult health care professionals before starting megavitamin, or herbal treatments** – Some herbal remedies may contain unknown substances that can damage the liver. There are no government approvals for herbs, so there is less information as to their effectiveness and safety. Herbal supplements are not as rigorously tested for their interactions with other drugs. Moderate vitamin use is harmless, but high doses are never recommended.
- **Get enough sleep** – If you feel tired during the day, listen to your body and get some sleep.
- **Try meditation, relaxation and massage** – All of these techniques have been proven to provide at a minimum, temporary relief for the aches and pains associated with HCV and treatment.

## The Mind

It is very important to reduce your stress and to ensure you are "in touch and in balance" with you body and your spirit. Be aware of how you are feeling and don't feel as though you have to apologize for not being as well as you would like to. There are a number of things you can do:

- **Adjust your schedule according to how you feel.**
- **Seek emotional support from others if you need it** – Don't be afraid to reach out. Free counseling services are available in your Community and through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.
- **Set achievable goals and work towards them** – If all you are able to do is fix you meals for the day, then consider that a success. Don't try to push yourself beyond your limits.
- **Try to maintain a sense of humor** – Look at the light side and watch comedy sitcoms and movies if possible.
- **Keeping a positive attitude is essential** – Read inspirational books and talk to positive people in your life.
- **Try to keep your mind active with activities you enjoy** – If you like or play music, try to play a little each day and listen to some motivational music. If art inspires you, try to do some drawing or reading art books.

