



Frequently, people learn that they have HCV from a blood test during a routine physical or because they have donated blood. While testing positive is not good news, it is not all doom and gloom or a death sentence. Here are some important things to remember.

- **Don't panic.** In most people the infection does not disappear, so you need to learn to live with it. Think positively. Many people live 20-40 years with the virus without becoming seriously ill or having liver failure.
- **Get regular medical attention.** A physician, who knows about HCV, a gastroenterologist or hepatologist, can watch for signs of trouble, identify problems and keep you informed about new treatments.
- **Avoid contact with blood.** HCV can be transmitted by blood. Cover open cuts and do not share razors, toothbrushes, manicure tools, needles, or anything that might have even the smallest amount of blood on it. Be wary of menstrual blood as well.
- **Protect your liver.** Avoid or severely restrict alcohol intake. Your liver may be further damaged by alcohol, particularly if taken with acetaminophen, found in Tylenol or other cold and headache remedies. Check with your doctor before using any medications, including over-the-counter drugs or alternative medicines.
- **Eat a well balanced diet.** Proper nutrition is essential. Drink lots of water.
- **Get vaccinated.** Vaccination against hepatitis A and B and pneumonia will protect you from serious complication when you are HCV infected.
- **Review all medications with your physician.** This is true of alternative treatments, too.
- **Be concerned about sexual partners.** While studies have shown the risk of sexual transmission is low between long-term, monogamous couples, people with new or multiple sexual partners should use latex condoms. Inform potential partners that you have the virus. In addition, viral levels in the blood can vary widely or rise in response to immunosuppressive drugs, which would make HCV carriers more infectious at certain times. Ribavirin can cause birth defects. Discuss precautions needed with your healthcare provider
- **Be informed.** Keep yourself updated on current research, information, and treatments. Be aware of your own health status and what various options are. Updates on current breakthroughs are reported in HFI's website.