

# Hep C & Healthy Living

## COFFEE, TEA & CAFFEINE

Caffeine in coffee and tea can increase alertness. There is no published evidence suggesting that tea, coffee or caffeine-containing drinks consumed in moderation cause particular problems for people with hep C.

## RED MEAT

There is no evidence suggesting people with hep C should avoid eating red meat. In small servings, red meat is a very useful food to include in a balanced diet and is a valuable source of iron and B group vitamins.

## DAIRY FOODS

Although dairy foods can contain high levels of saturated fats, they are excellent sources of other nutrients essential for health. It is hard to get enough calcium without milk products, and lower-fat dairy products can replace full fat options. Calcium enriched soy milks can be used as substitutes.

## VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS

Illness can increase the need for vitamins and minerals, however a balanced healthy diet should contain a sufficient amount. People with serious liver disease should consult a specialist before taking supplements, and care should always be taken not to exceed the recommended dose. It is best to avoid vitamin A as large doses or long term use is associated with abnormal liver function tests and increased fibrosis.

## SALT

High salt intake can increase blood pressure and the risk of heart disease and stroke. Most of our salt intake (about 75%) comes from processed foods and it is worth trying low-salt or salt-reduced options. Also try to use less salt in home cooking and at the table.

## SUGARS

Sugars can give energy but it is better to get energy from foods like whole grains, meats, fruits, cereals and vegetables.

*The general dietary information provided here is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor, specialist, dietician or nutritionist.*

This resource is based on Hepatitis NSW's *Hep C and Staying Healthy* factsheet.



36 David Street, Turner, ACT, 2612  
PO Box 6259, O'Connor, ACT, 2602

Phone: (02) 6230 6344  
Fax: (02) 6230 6266  
Web: [www.hepatitisACT.com.au](http://www.hepatitisACT.com.au)  
E-mail: [info@hepatitisACT.com.au](mailto:info@hepatitisACT.com.au)

Staying as healthy as possible helps people cope better with hep C and also helps avoid additional liver problems such as fatty liver disease.

Making lifestyle changes can reduce the impacts of hep C:

- Reducing alcohol consumption
- Maintaining a healthy diet and body weight
- Exercising sensibly
- Managing stress
- Getting enough rest, and
- Stopping smoking, tobacco & cannabis.

The liver is a very important organ and needs to be looked after. The possibility of advancing liver disease should be taken seriously.

People at risk of liver disease should be getting specialist advice through a specialist liver clinic or primary care physician with expertise in hep C.



# Hep C and Healthy Living



## ALCOHOL

The risk of liver damage is higher for people with hep C who drink alcohol.

It is recommended people with hep C stop drinking, or reduce alcohol consumption in line with Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. For healthy adults, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury. A standard drink is one schooner of light beer, one middy of full strength beer, one standard glass of wine or one nip of spirits.

Some people have difficulty reducing their alcohol intake, and should seek advice from a doctor. The following tips might also be helpful:

- Have regular alcohol-free days
- Try low or zero alcohol drinks
- Follow any alcoholic drink with several non-alcoholic drinks
- Avoid places where there is pressure to drink
- Avoid drinking in rounds (having turns at buying everyone's drinks), and
- Finish each drink and then wait a while before starting a new one.



## VACCINATIONS FOR HEP A & B

People with hep C who also contract hep A or B may develop serious liver damage. A doctor should be consulted about vaccination if blood tests indicate a lack of immunity to either hep A or B.

## OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY & HEP C

OST helps people to deal with drug dependence. People with hep C who are drug dependent may be at elevated risk of liver disease, especially if approaching middle-age or later years.

## MEDICATION & THE LIVER

It is important that people with hep C speak to a doctor about prescription and over-the-counter medications, and follow the directions. A person with serious liver disease should consult their specialist about all medications.

## DIABETES & BODY WEIGHT

Type 2 diabetes is more common among people with hep C than the general population.

Managing type 2 diabetes includes diet and exercise, and it is especially important to avoid overuse of sugars and becoming overweight.

Having hep C and being overweight is a dangerous combination. Maintaining a healthy weight improves long term hep C outcomes and improves treatment outcomes.

## DIET & HEP C

Staying as healthy as possible helps people cope better with hep C. To help improve health, eating a wide variety of foods in the right balance is important. Avoid restrictive or "liver cleansing" diets as there is little clinical or biological basis to support them.

In the absence of serious liver damage there are no particular foods that people with hep C should avoid. People with serious liver damage should consult a doctor and/or dietician for dietary advice.

## FATS

It is not necessary to cut out all fats and oils because some are needed by the body to make hormones, and for cells to function properly.

- Try eating reduced-fat dairy products.
- Buy fat-trimmed lean meats (with Heart Foundation tick of approval)
- Avoid processed foods such as:
  - Pizza
  - Salami
  - Sausage
  - Meat pies and pasties
  - Fast food
  - Dim Sims, or
  - Battered fish and chips.