DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that affects the liver. Asking the right questions during your conversation with your doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know
Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here’s what they mean.

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cirrhosis</td>
<td>Scarring of the liver, which stops it from functioning properly. Cirrhosis usually develops over a period of many years. It can be caused by viruses but also by other things like alcohol use.</td>
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<td>Chronic Infection</td>
<td>The phase of an infection where the disease is present for a long time. It may be progressing slowly, but the symptoms are generally less serious than an acute infection.</td>
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<td>Acute Infection</td>
<td>Relatively rare for hepatitis C. Where present, it causes symptoms such as decreased appetite, joint pain, and weight loss. Most people with acute infections of hepatitis C will eventually develop chronic hepatitis C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaundice</td>
<td>Can occur when the liver is damaged or not functioning fully. The eyes and skin may become yellow or green. It is caused by a buildup of bilirubin in the blood.</td>
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<td>Ascites</td>
<td>A build-up of fluid in the abdomen.</td>
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<td>Hepatocellular Carcinoma</td>
<td>A type of liver cancer that is much more common in people with cirrhosis. Having both hepatitis B and hepatitis C can make this type of cancer even more likely.</td>
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<td>Direct Acting Antivirals (DAA)</td>
<td>A relatively new type of medication that can be used to treat, and even cure, hepatitis C infections.</td>
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<td>Interferon-Alfa</td>
<td>An older type of medication that can be used to treat hepatitis C, usually in combination with another medication called ribavirin.</td>
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Questions to Ask
These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your hepatitis C.

About Symptoms
- What does it mean if my urine is a different color?
- Are there symptoms I should watch for that would suggest I've become infected or my infection is getting worse?
- What should I do if I start having symptoms of jaundice, such as yellow skin?
- I've been warned about swelling in my abdomen. What would cause that, and what should I do?

About Causes & Risk Factors
- I live with someone with hepatitis C, are there precautions I should take?
- My partner has hepatitis C, but I don't. What do I have to worry about when we kiss or have sex? Are there things I can do to make it safer?
- What should I do if I have hepatitis C and get cut or bleed on a surface at home. Are there particular ways I should clean?
- Are there things I should be doing to reduce the risk of exposing others to my hepatitis C?

About Diagnosis
- Does it make sense for me to be regularly screened for hepatitis C, given my risk factors?
- I was exposed to infected blood, how long should I wait before getting tested?
- I've heard there are different types of hepatitis C tests, which one(s) should I get?
- What's the difference between the hepatitis C screening test and the RNA test?
- Now that I've been diagnosed, how often should I be examined and/or get my liver checked?
About Treatment

- Am I a good candidate for treatment with a direct acting antiviral?
- What forms of treatment are available that would be appropriate for my type of hepatitis C?
- How long will I need to be treated for hepatitis C?
- What would happen if I missed a dose of treatment?
- What are the side effects of this treatment compared to other treatments that are available?
- What is the cost of this treatment compared to other options?
- If you can't cure my hepatitis C, how can I best stay healthy?