

Dealing with Discomforts

Nutrition Tips for People with Hepatitis C

You may have discomforts – such as fatigue, nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, diarrhea, taste changes – from the symptoms of hepatitis C or from the side effects of prescribed medicines.

Make the most of each mouthful. If you cannot eat much, choose foods that are high in protein and calories.

If you often have no appetite, or don't feel well and food doesn't appeal to you, you can lose weight without wanting to.

Check your weight regularly. See your dietitian if you have difficulty keeping weight on, and see your doctor if the problem continues.

Fatigue

- Stock up on nutritious, basic, easy-to-prepare foods when you are feeling well.
- When you cook, make extra food and freeze it.
- Have prepared snacks on hand (see "Snappy Snacks" for examples).
- Keep liquid nutrition supplements in stock.
- Ask friends and family to help you make meals.

Nausea or vomiting

- Eat what you can, and eat most when you feel hungry.
- Sample dry, bland foods to see if they go down well.
- Avoid spicy foods.
- Drink lots of fluids. Drink fluids separately from meals.
- Use liquid nutrition supplements.
- Learn to avoid your triggers, such as the smell, taste or even the thought of some foods.

No appetite or feeling full quickly

- Eat smaller portions more often.
- Try different tastes to boost your appetite: bitter, sour, salty, sweet.
- Drink milk, milkshakes, juice or fortified soy beverages instead of low-calorie fluids like tea, broth or coffee.
- Use liquid nutrition supplements when you need to.
- Do some light exercise before eating.

Diarrhea

- Eat smaller portions more often.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- Make eating a relaxed time.
- See your health care provider, who can recommend appropriate liquid nutrition supplements.

Taste changes

If red meat tastes bitter:

- Try chicken, fish, baked beans, cheese, yogurt, eggs, peanut butter and other protein foods.
- Try meat cold or at room temperature.

How to Find a Registered Dietitian

- Visit www.dietitians.ca/find.
- Call your local public health department, hospital or community health centre.
- Call the Consulting Dietitians Network at 1-888-901-7776.

Registered Dietitians can help you meet your nutrition needs by designing a personal meal plan.

You definitely should see a Registered Dietitian if you have:

- complications related to advanced liver disease, such as cirrhosis or fluid retention
- another medical condition, such as diabetes or HIV
- a problem with weight loss or weight gain
- diarrhea for more than 3 days
- trouble eating well
- diagnosis of fluid retention requiring a low salt diet

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For more tips, see Appendix F of the full Guidelines at www.dietitians.ca/resources/HepC_Guidelines_March2003.pdf

Snappy Snacks

Choose snacks from the four food groups, like these:

- half a turkey sandwich and applesauce
- milk pudding and oatmeal cookies
- granola bar with regular or chocolate milk
- fruit smoothie
- vegetables and dip
- fruit and cheese
- a bowl of oatmeal, milk and a banana

Liquid Nutrition Supplements

Use these drinks for extra calories and protein, especially when you are finding it hard to eat well.

Homemade Recipes

Nutrient Booster

Add 1/4 cup (60 mL) of skim milk powder to a glass of whole milk

Sunny Orange Shake*

Combine in a blender until smooth:

- 3/4 cup (175 mL) vanilla-flavoured yogurt
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) skim milk powder
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) orange juice

Store-Bought Supplements

You can find them in the pharmacy, or the pharmacy section of your grocery store. Some examples are:

- Boost®
- Carnation Instant Breakfast®
- Ensure®
- Equate®
- Life Replenish®
- Resource®



*Source: *Great Food Fast* – Dietitians of Canada 2000

Herbal Remedies

Natural does not always mean safe. Some herbs can do more harm than good.

- Herbal products have not been proven to cure hepatitis C or ease the symptoms.
 - Some can be toxic to your liver.
 - Some can interfere with interferon and other prescribed medications.
- Talk with your health care provider if you are taking or thinking about taking any herbal products.

Focus on Fluids

Most people need 6 to 8 cups of fluids every day, unless your doctor has told you to limit your fluids. Avoid letting yourself get thirsty.

You can get fluids from:

- water
- juice
- liquid nutrition supplements
- milkshakes
- broth
- milk
- fruit drinks
- fortified soy beverages
- soup

This handout is based on *Hepatitis C: Nutrition Care – Canadian Guidelines for Health Care Providers*, 2003.

www.dietitians.ca/resources/HepC_Guidelines_March2003.pdf

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hepc/index-eng.php

Another handout in this series is available, *Helping You Feel Your Best: Nutrition Tips for People with Hepatitis C*.

This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or consultation with a Registered Dietitian.

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