



Helping You Feel Your Best! Nutrition Tips for People with Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C harms your liver. Your liver plays many important roles. It deals with everything you eat and drink. A healthy lifestyle can help you feel your best and help your body cope with the hepatitis C virus.

Healthy eating and moderate physical activity can:

- give your body the energy it needs to work well,
- boost your immune system,
- help your liver renew itself, and
- decrease some of the symptoms of your hepatitis C and the side effects of treatment, such as feeling tired and sick.

Eat well

- Choose a variety of foods from all four food groups of Canada's Food Guide.
- Get plenty of Vegetables & Fruit and Grain Products.
- Eat at least 2 servings from the Meat & Alternatives food group (such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, and cooked legumes (e.g. dried beans, peas and lentils)).
- Focus on lower fat choices within each food group.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids every day.
- Keep your energy level up by eating smaller meals and snacks more often.

Supplement carefully

- Use only herbal products that your health care provider has told you are safe.
Do not take more than one multivitamin per day – and you may need one without iron. Talk to your health care provider about which vitamin and mineral supplements are best for you.

Take care

- Avoid alcohol.
- Enjoy light to moderate physical activity, such as walking, swimming, gardening and stretching.
- Build up slowly to 30 to 60 minutes of activity, at least 4 times a week.
- Avoid food poisoning by storing and preparing foods safely. Wash your hands often.
- Talk to your health care provider if depression affects your ability to eat well.

Trusted advice from dietitians. www.dietitians.ca

If you have complications...

...such as cirrhosis or fluid retention, you need to pay even more attention to nutrition.

- Get tailored advice from your doctor or dietitian.
- Eat smaller meals every few hours. This may be easier for your body to handle and will help keep your energy level up.
- You may need to limit your intake of salt if you have swelling of the abdomen (ascites) or legs (edema).
- Try extra-strength liquid nutrition supplements, available from your local pharmacy. Some examples are: Boost Plus Calories®, Ensure Plus®, Resource Plus®.

Low-Cost Nutritious Choices

Eating well doesn't have to be expensive. Low-cost nutritious choices can be found in each food group:

- bread, rice, pasta, rolled oats
- carrots, potatoes, frozen vegetables, apples, in-season berries
- milk powder, plain milk or yogurt
- baked beans, eggs, dried beans, peas and lentils, canned fish, ground beef

How to Find a Registered Dietitian

- Visit <http://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

Some Useful On-line Resources

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide
<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/index-home-accueil-eng.php>
- Dietitians of Canada: Your Health section
(Includes many consumer tools such as EATracker, Recipe Analyzer and many fact sheets)
<http://www.dietitians.ca>
- Food Safety information and materials
<http://www.canfightbac.org>

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- Nutrition labelling education materials

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php>

- Heppo Recipe Exchange

(Recipes submitted by other people infected with the hepatitis C virus; not specifically “HepC healthy” unless noted.)

<http://www.hepcnet.net/recipes/recipeindex.html>

- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

<http://www.nccam.nih.gov/health/hepatitisc/index.htm>

- Public Health Agency of Canada hepatitis C information

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hepc/index_e.html

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