

Frequently Asked Questions

The ABCs of Hepatitis C: A Primer for Family Physicians



As presented by **Gilles D. Pinette**, BSc,
MD, CCFP

1. Who should be tested for hepatitis C virus (HCV)?

- Anyone who has a risk factor for HCV infection should be tested.
- If there are suspicions of chronic liver disease or chronic hepatitis C, such as fatigue or right upper quadrant abdominal discomfort, screening for HCV and other liver diseases should be done.
- The presence of unexplained alanine transaminase or aspartate transaminase is sometimes due to chronic HCV infection.

2. How is HCV managed?

- The most important aspect in HCV management is patient education. Patients should be especially advised to reduce or abstain from alcohol consumption, as regular intake promotes rapid progression to cirrhosis.
- Patients can also be referred to The Dietitians of Canada Web site for a guideline on nutrition care for HCV-infected individuals (http://dietitians.ca/resources/HepatitisC_Guidelines.htm).
- The current drug treatment is combination therapy with interferon and ribavirin.

3. What are the contraindications for the use of interferon and ribavirin?

- Active alcohol use
- Pregnancy
- Expected non-compliance
- Decompensated liver disease
- Active depression
- HIV
- Active autoimmune disease
- Poorly controlled diabetes
- Severe myelosuppression

For an in-depth article on hepatitis C, please go to page 95.