

Depression and Its Impact in Hepatitis C Infection

Patient Self-Help Guide

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Exercise

Exercise has been shown to help by boosting mood, increasing energy, decreasing anxiety, and minimizing irritability and anger. There are many types of exercise that patients can do and enjoy. The important thing is finding something that fits their lifestyle. Types of exercise that patients may wish to consider are walking, biking, swimming, gentle stretching exercises, calisthenics, jogging, weight lifting, or organized fitness classes.

Relaxation techniques

There are many techniques that assist people in relaxing. For some patients, relaxing may be a new skill they will need to develop. It is an individual experience that will be different from person to person. Suggestions for relaxing include meditation, listening to music, reading, going for a walk, taking a shower or bath, getting a massage, spending time outdoors, or participating in group activities.

Good Sleep Hygiene

Getting the appropriate amount and quality of sleep can contribute to a sense of well-being. The following are suggestions to help establish good sleep habits:

- Sleep only when drowsy.
- Leave your bedroom if you are unable to fall asleep or stay asleep.
- Go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time each morning.
- Use the bedroom only for sleep or sex.
- Avoid naps.
- Avoid caffeine and other stimulants (including coffee, tea, soft drinks that contain caffeine, and chocolate) within 4 - 6 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid the use of tobacco products close to bedtime or during the night.
- Avoid large meals and strenuous exercise prior to sleep.
- Participate in regular daytime exercise.
- Avoid over-the-counter sleeping aids.

Healthy Food Choices

Food choices can influence energy levels, appearances, and how we feel in general. Often a consultation with a nutritionist can help us to design a meal plan that is healthy, well-balanced, economical, and satisfying. Less refined sugar, more fruits, vegetables, and grains are a good place to begin because these foods are lacking in sufficient amounts in many people's diets. Encouraging eight to ten glasses of water a day can assist with the side effects of hepatitis C treatment.

Get support

Talking about your experiences will help you identify what is working, what is not working, and will help you identify strategies that may improve your symptoms. Look for support from your healthcare providers, family and friends, and support groups.

There are numerous non-pharmacological strategies that assist people in coping with depression and other feelings of malaise associated with hepatitis C. They are an important component of providing quality health care and should not be overlooked.