

TIPS FOR COPING WITH HAVING A FAMILY MEMBER WITH HEPATITIS C

Remember:

- ◆ You cannot cure your family member. Despite your efforts, symptoms may get worse or may improve. Enjoy the good times.
- ◆ If you feel much resentment, you are giving too much.
- ◆ It can be as hard for you to accept the illness, as it is for the ill family member.
- ◆ You may learn something about yourself as you learn about a family member's journey through illness.
- ◆ Separate the person from the virus. Love the person, even if you hate the virus or side effects of the medication.
- ◆ It is not OK for you to be neglected. You have needs & wants too.
- ◆ Your chances of catching hepatitis C from casual or sexual contact with a family member is extremely low, providing proper precautions are taken to avoid blood contact.
- ◆ Everyone's blood has the potential to make someone else sick. Never share razors, toothbrushes or drug injection/snorting equipment. Make sure that tattoo, manicure, electrolysis and acupuncture establishments use sterile equipment.
- ◆ The illness of a family member is nothing to be ashamed of.
- ◆ You may encounter discrimination from an apprehensive public.
- ◆ You and your family member may have different comfort levels around disclosure of information to others. It is important to discuss this and be respectful of each other's needs.
- ◆ No one is to blame.

- ◆ Don't forget your sense of humour.
- ◆ Acknowledge the courage your family member may show in dealing with the illness.
- ◆ Your family member is entitled to his or her own life journey, as are you.
- ◆ Resist the survival-oriented response of shutting down emotionally. Find someone to talk to. You are not alone.
- ◆ Sharing your thoughts and feelings with others in a support group is helpful and enlightening for many.
- ◆ It may be necessary to renegotiate the way things have been done in your relationship, both emotionally and physically.
- ◆ Recognizing that a person has limited capabilities should not mean that you expect nothing of them.
- ◆ You may experience grief issues about what you had and lost, or about what you never had.
- ◆ After denial, sadness, and anger comes acceptance. The addition of understanding yields compassion.
- ◆ Diseases are a part of the varied fabric of life.
- ◆ Don't shoulder the whole responsibility for your ill family member.
- ◆ Forgive yourself and others for mistakes made.
- ◆ Physicians have varying degrees of competence, knowledge and experience.
- ◆ If you can't care for yourself, you can't care for another.
- ◆ The needs of the ill person do not necessarily always come first.
- ◆ Chronic illness affects the entire family, not just the person who actually has the disease.

- ◆ It is natural to experience a range of emotions such as grief, guilt, fear, anger, sadness, hurt and confusion.
- ◆ Support your local Hepatitis C group and the search for a cure!



WHAT SHOULDN'T I SAY?

Most people really do want to be helpful, but sometimes they just don't seem to think before they speak.

Here are a few of the "Least Helpful" things you can say to your HCV-positive friend:

- ◆ "It's all in your head."
- ◆ "You just need to get out and exercise more."
- ◆ "No one ever said life was fair."
- ◆ "You think you've got problems..."
- ◆ "Maybe you should eat better/take vitamins."
- ◆ "You don't look sick!"
- ◆ "Everybody knows HCV doesn't have any symptoms. You're just looking for attention."
- ◆ "That which does not kill us makes us stronger."
- ◆ "Believe me, I know how you feel. I was sick once."
- ◆ "So, you feel sick. Don't you always?"
- ◆ "Oh, cheer up!"

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

Do you really want to help? Here are a few of the “Best” things you can say to your HCV-positive friend:

- ◆ “I love you!”
- ◆ “I care.”
- ◆ “You’re not alone in this.”
- ◆ “I’m not going to abandon you.”
- ◆ “Do you want a hug?”
- ◆ “I am going to take care of myself so you don’t need to worry that your pain might hurt me.”
- ◆ “I listen to you talk about it, and I can’t imagine what it’s like for you. I just can’t imagine how hard it must be.”
- ◆ “If you need a friend...” (and mean it.)
- ◆ “Is there anything I can do to help?” (and mean it.)
- ◆ “I am going food shopping tomorrow. Give me your list and I will pick it up, bring it home to you and help put it away.”
- ◆ “I don’t care if you get tired and cranky. I love you and spending time with you is still fun.”
- ◆ “I will be over in half an hour with dinner and a video, and then I will leave so you don’t have to entertain me.”
- ◆ “It’s okay, you don’t have to be brave for me. Let me be the strong one for a while.”
- ◆ “It is a gift to me that you permit me to help and support you. I know how hard it is for you to ask for help.”

West Kootenay/Boundary Support Groups

Castlegar/Grand Forks

Contact: Robin – 365-6137

Kootenay/ Boundary

Meetings: Second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 7pm, 1159 Pine Ave, Trail

Contact: Brian 368-1141, k-9@direct.ca

Nelson Hepatitis C Support Group

Meetings at ANKORS, 101 Baker St.

For information on the next meeting call Ken Thomson at ANKORS

1-800-421-2437, (250) 505-5506 or

Ken Forsythe (250) 355-2732, keen@netidea.com

Nakusp Support Group

Meetings: Contact Ken

1-800-421-2437, (250) 505-5506



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HELPING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WITH HEPATITIS C



Hepatitis C Support and Education
Project

1-800-421-2437

505-5506