

Hepatitis C Treatment

This leaflet explains more about Hepatitis C treatment, including the benefits, risks and what you can expect when you come to hospital

If you have any further questions, please speak to one of the viral hepatitis team.

What happens after I have been referred for treatment?

Once you have been referred for treatment your case will be discussed by the doctors, nurses and pharmacists of the viral hepatitis team in a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting.

The team will consider which treatment option would be most suitable for. You will be contacted by the MDT co-ordinator and an appointment will be arranged with one of the nurse specialists to start treatment as quickly as possible depending on your clinical condition. How quickly this happens will depend on your clinical need as assessed by the multi-disciplinary team.

What is the treatment for hepatitis C?

The drugs to treat hepatitis C are known as direct acting anti-viral (DAA). DAA treatments are suitable for most people with hepatitis C. The treatment involves taking a few tablets daily for up to 24 weeks. The tablets are easy to take, with few side effects. If you do experience any side effects it is important to discuss them with your clinician

How do the anti-viral drugs work?

The anti-viral drug works by stopping the hepatitis C virus growing and reproducing; it aims to eliminate the virus completely.

This means that most patients will be cured of hepatitis C after taking the anti-viral treatment.

What are the risks of hepatitis C?

If the hepatitis C virus is left untreated it can cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer which may lead to death. The virus can be passed on by blood to blood contact.

By taking the treatment it will get rid of the virus preventing or limiting any damage to your liver and ensure it is not passed on to other people.

To prevent spreading the virus you should avoid sharing toothbrushes, scissors, tattoo needles, injection equipment and razors with other people.

Hepatitis C is not spread by: kissing, hugging, sharing kitchen utensils and toilet seats.

How can I prepare for treatment?

Before starting treatment, a member of the viral hepatitis team will discuss what anti-viral drug you need to take, how you should take them and any side effects which you may experience.

If you think you will have difficulties following these instructions please let a member of the viral hepatitis team know.

Please bring a list of your current medications, vitamins and supplements with you to your first hospital appointment.

During treatment

You will be seen regularly by the viral hepatitis team during treatment and have regular blood tests to see how you are responding to the medication and to monitor for potential side effects. Attending your appointments is essential.

The drugs used to treat hepatitis C are well tolerated with few side effects. It is important to take care of your drugs as they are expensive to replace. You must take your medicines as instructed by your healthcare professional. If you experience any side effects, you should continue to take the medication until you have spoken to one of the viral hepatitis team.

It's important to take your medicine every day for it to work properly and cure the virus. If you miss more than one dose you must let a member of viral hepatitis team know. If you do lose your medicines they may not be replaced.

Will my treatment react with my other medicines or recreational drugs?

Anti-viral medication can interact with other medicines, recreational drugs, herbal remedies and vitamin supplements. This can lead to increased side effects, or the treatment not working properly. Before you receive treatment, a full assessment for potential interactions between any medications, supplement or recreational drugs you are taking and the anti-viral agents will be undertaken.

Always check with your viral hepatitis team before starting any new medicines.

Is treatment safe to take while pregnant or breastfeeding?

You must not take any of the direct acting anti-viral medication for hepatitis C if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Men and women of child bearing age must use appropriate contraception for the duration and for a period after treatment. If you become pregnant whilst on treatment please contact the viral hepatitis team as soon as possible. If your treatment includes ribavirin you must continue to use an effective form of contraception for 6 months after treatment has finished.

After treatment

After completion of treatment you will continue to be cared for by the viral hepatitis team to confirm that the anti-viral drug has successfully cleared the hepatitis C virus. The hepatitis C treatment cures around 98% of people. Attending your appointments is essential. See your appointment card.

Hepatitis C Clinical Registry

We are obliged by NHS England and Public Health England to submit your information to the confidential national Hepatitis C Clinical Registry System. Your information is recorded in the Hepatitis C Clinical Registry System to ensure that the care you receive is safe, effective and of the highest possible quality. The information held in the Registry will always be kept confidential, secure and accurate. It includes:

- Your gender, ethnicity, country of birth, NHS number and date of birth but not your name
- Contact we have had with you, such as clinic visits and referrals
- Details and records about the hepatitis C treatment and care you have received
- Outcomes of treatments and medications provided
- Hepatitis C test and investigation results.

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. If you have concerns about the Hepatitis C Register, please email: HCV.registry@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Appointment Card

Clinical Nurse Specialist

Antiviral Treatment.....

Duration

Clinic Location.....

Appointment	Date	Viral Load
Start of treatment		
Treatment week 2		
Treatment week 4		
Treatment week 8		
Treatment week 12		
Post treatment wk 12		
Post treatment wk 24		
Post treatment wk 48		

Useful sources of information

Receiving a hepatitis C diagnosis can be a difficult experience. You may find it useful to talk in confidence to someone who has experienced living with hepatitis C.

The Hepatitis C Helpline is a charity which provides this support. The helpline is staffed by people who have had hepatitis C.

Hepatitis C Helpline: Tel. 0845 223 4424 or 020 7089 6221 (10.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday) or email helpline@hepctrust.org.uk or visit www.hepctrust.org.uk

The British Liver Trust is a national charity that runs support groups, and has a range of publications for patients and professionals about liver disease.

British Liver Trust

Tel. 0800 652 7330 or visit www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact the St George's Hospital Hepatitis Team, Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm:

Viral Hepatitis administration team:	020 8725 3032
Viral Hepatitis Clinical Nurse Specialists team:	020 8725 0758
Medicines Information (Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm):	020 8725 1033

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

