

a series of fact sheets written  
by experts in the field of liver  
disease

## *HCV Wellness:*

# *Meditation*

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**HEALTH** includes body, mind, and spirit.

*Meditation may enhance our health by helping each of these aspects. Because of its positive effect, meditation may be used as a tool to help manage chronic illnesses such as chronic hepatitis C virus infection.*

*There are many ways to use meditation. Some people meditate for stress relief while others meditate as part of a spiritual practice. In general, meditation is a tool to help quiet the mind while promoting awareness and a sense of well-being. Meditation is sometimes described as the practice of mindfulness or living in the present.*

*Meditation is simple to learn, although not necessarily easy to practice. Try it; you have nothing to lose but stress and tension. Here are a few suggestions to help get you started:*

**Practice regularly, but start small** – Initially practice for 5 minutes daily and gradually increase to 15-30

minutes. Some people find it helpful to meditate more frequently but for short intervals.

**Set aside time to meditate** – Schedule a regular time to practice. Meditating in the morning has the added advantage of setting a relaxing tone for the day.

**Dress comfortably** - Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes. Make sure the temperature in the room is also comfortable.

**Location** - Choose a quiet and relaxing location. You can sit in a comfortable chair or on the floor with a cushion. Lying down is alright if you can avoid the temptation to fall asleep. Walking meditation is another alternative.

**Sitting** - You can sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair with hands resting on your legs and feet gently touching the floor. You may prefer sitting crossed-leg on the floor, chair or cushion. Comfort is essential. In this application, meditation is meant to alleviate health problems, not to create them.

**Managing distractions** – Distraction and resistance are as much a part of meditation as breathing is. The mind will continue to think, the ears will continue to hear, and the body will continue to feel. It is perfectly acceptable to have thoughts and to notice sounds. The tricky part is not letting these occurrences dominate and call your attention away from your breathing. One way to manage distractions is by acknowledging and incorporating them into your awareness. For instance, if you find yourself thinking about an errand you want to attend to, try saying, “thinking” and gently turn your attention back to breathing.

**How to meditate** - There are many types of meditation and you may want to experiment with different techniques before settling on any one particular style. Meditation can be self-taught or learned from a teacher. Some meditation centers offer classes in various disciplines, such as Insight, Transcendental or Zen meditation. Books and tapes can provide instruction on the art of meditation. Here are a few simple techniques you can try:

- **Breathing** - close your eyes and concentrate on your breath. Feel your breath as it moves into and out of your lungs. You may want to count each breath until you reach four and then repeat. Try to relax into your breath and feel your stress melt away.

- *Candle* - Light a candle in a dark, draft-free area and place it at eye level. Gaze at the flame and concentrate on your breath. Soon you will find your mind relaxed and still. Note: This should not be practiced if you suffer from migraines or seizures.

- *Meditation of Loving Kindness* - Relax and concentrate on your breath. As you are breathing in say, "May I be well." As you breathe out say, "May others be well".

- *Chanting* – You can use a mantra to chant while meditating. Practitioners of Transcendental Meditation (TM) are given a word (mantra) when initiated into TM. Others may simply use "OM" or "peace" while meditating. Christian and other religious contemplative practices may use meaningful words. Try sitting comfortably and repeat a word or sound. Feel the vibration while you breathe out. Stretch it out as long as you can. If you stay with it, you may soon feel relaxed and tranquil.

## Resources

- *A Path with Heart*, by Jack Kornfield
- *Start Where You Are*, by Pema Chodron
- *Stillness Speaks*, by Eckhart Tolle
- *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Wherever You Go There You Are*, by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, by Shunryu Suzuki
- The Transcendental Meditation Center – [www.tm.org](http://www.tm.org)
- Vipassana Meditation - [www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)
- World Wide Online Meditation Center – [www.meditationcenter.com](http://www.meditationcenter.com)
- Zen – [www.do-not-zzz.com](http://www.do-not-zzz.com)
- *Self-Care for Hepatitis C – Applied Meditation for a Healthy Liver*. A comprehensive CD and companion 32 page booklet is included. For more information and a free 7 minute download go to [www.hepCmeditations.org](http://www.hepCmeditations.org)

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***Below are just some of the publications and services you can find at [www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org):***

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- Medical Writers' Circle
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- Weekly News Review
- Disability & Benefits Column
- Hepatitis B information
- HIV/HCV Coinfection information
- Support Group Listings for USA, Canada and Elsewhere
- Links to Clinical Trials
- Links to other Helpful Organizations
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- Fact Sheet series: (English, French and Spanish)
  - \*Easy C Facts
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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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