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

HCV Treatment Side Effect Management: Water

Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRINKING ADEQUATE AMOUNTS OF WATER DURING HCV THERAPY

can not be overstated. In fact, many of the side effects from HCV therapy can be helped by simply consuming an adequate amount of fluids. Can you drink too much water? YES! Drinking excessive amounts of water can affect the body's electrolyte balance, which could potentially lead to serious health problems and even death. For this reason it is best to check in with your medical provider about the amount of water you should drink while on and off of therapy.

There are many strategies that can help you achieve a goal of drinking the right amount of water every day to stay healthy. Try some of these simple tips:

- Drink water before you become thirsty – being thirsty is a sign that you may be dehydrated.
- Try to limit drinking too many caffeinated beverages such as sodas, tea and coffee. Healthy beverages equals a healthy diet.
- Keep water in places that you frequent – at home, in the office and in the car.
- A slice of lemon, lime or cucumber will add some flavor to the water.
- Sipping water throughout the day instead of gulping it will give your body more of a chance to absorb it.

How Much Water?

Drink plenty of water and other healthy liquids. Limit caffeine to 200 to 300 mgs a day (2 to 4 cups of coffee). Limit sugar to 6.5 teaspoons for women and 9.5 teaspoons for men.

In the past, the general rule was to drink 8-8oz glasses of water a day. However, there have been subsequent studies that don't back up this view. Now, the general rule is to make sure you are well hydrated. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends that the general fluid intake should be 91 ounces for women and 125 ounces for men. But remember that fluid intake can come from food and other drinks. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that you drink when thirsty and follow some of the tips below.

Try some of these simple tips to keep track of the amount of water you drink:

- Fill up a water bottle with fresh water. Write down the amount of water that is held in the bottle and how many times it is refilled throughout the day.
- Buy commercial water bottles that list the fluid content. Fill up or buy enough bottles to meet the daily requirement. Set the bottles in plain view to help remember to drink all of the bottles.

Note: The media has been focused on the use of plastic bottles and the general issue of bottled water. If you filled one third of the plastic bottle with oil, this would be equivalent to how much energy is needed to make the bottle, package the liquid and ship it to retail outlets. This does not even take into account the problem of disposal. From a practical standpoint, we want to encourage people to drink water, but perhaps a good approach is to re-fill and reuse the bottle and always recycle it to prevent the unnecessary waste and pollution of our valuable resources.

The positive impact of drinking water on side effect management is quite substantial. It is recommended that you drink water right before and right after self-injection and stay well-hydrated throughout the week.

Side Effect Management

Many people on HCV therapy report that on days when they drink plenty of water there is a marked decrease in the side effects compared to days when they drink little or no water.

The benefits of drinking water for side effect management include:

- Water flushes out wastes, transports nutrients, and regulates body temperature.
- Water will help keep skin hydrated during therapy, which will help reduce the dry skin syndrome caused by HCV medications.
- Many people on HCV therapy experience the ribavirin cough – water can help lubricate the throat, which results in less coughing.
- Adequate water consumption aids the digestive system, helping to avoid constipation and other digestive problems.
- Drinking water will help replace fluids lost during a bout of diarrhea.
- HCV medications reduce natural saliva production, which can increase the risk of dental cavities and diseases. Water will help keep your gums hydrated and will rinse away harmful bacteria in the mouth.

Drinking adequate amounts of water is one of the best strategies people can use while on therapy to lessen the side effects of interferon-based therapy and stay healthy.



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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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